# THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. MAGAZINE

AUGUST 50c PDC

## NAPOLEON SOLO
## ILLYA KURYAKIN

They were only two men resisting a powerful foe as off the coast of South America a new island nation struggles for its very existence.

in

## THE CAT AND MOUSE AFFAIR

The New Complete U.N.C.L.E. Novel by

**ROBERT HART DAVIS**

Also

## NIGHTMARE FOR A NIGHT

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# The Cat and Mouse Affair

## by Dennis Lynds

**August 1966**
**Volume 2, Issue 1**

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Act II: Go, Bid the Soldiers Shoot!
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# ACT I: WHO SHOOTS LAST, SHOOTS BEST

## ONE

THERE was a fog that night over San Pablo.

San Pablo is the capital city of Zambala, the new island nation off the northeast coast of South America.

The former British colony has been free for some years. Free and proud of its stable and progressive government under the leadership of its liberation-hero and premier, Malcolm Martinez Roy—M. M. Roy, the Lion of Zambala!

San Pablo is an old pirate city, built in an area of lowland swamps. Its deep, sheltered harbor is one of the finest in the world. The long, curving waterfront road is lined with piers on the waterside and the old buildings of the pirate city on the landside. The waterfront is an area of tourist shops, restaurants good and bad, and hotels both old and new.

One of the oldest hotels is The Morgan House. It is back from the water, just off Front Street. It is a quiet hotel, frequented now largely by sailors and their women friends.

Its tavern is a noted tourist site, a place where the tourists can see some life-in-the-raw at a minimum risk. No tourists actually stay at The Morgan House—that is life a little too raw. The rooms on the second, third and fourth floors of the old building are cheap and used only by sailors, furtive men with no visible occupations, and the transients of the tropics.

This night, because of the thick and evil-smelling fog, the tavern was empty of all but a few silent sailors. By midnight the tavern was as silent as a tomb. Only the distant horns of the buoys, the far-off bells, the faint lap-

lap of the water against the piers, could be heard in the tavern, where a last few sailors drank themselves to sleep.

Shots tore the fog and the silence, just after midnight.

Shots from the second floor of The Morgan House.

The owner of the hotel, one Nathan Bedford, did not go to investigate. He knew violence too well. He immediately picked up his telephone and called for the police. Then he stationed himself at a particular corner of the bar.

From this spot, and only from this spot, Bedford had a clear view of the front stairs and of the back stairs. They were the only two ways out of the hotel.

As Bedford watched and waited, he held a large, heavy pistol in his hand out of sight beneath the bar.

But no one came down the stairs.

When the police arrived, no one had come down the stairs.

Bedford nodded to the stairs, raised two fingers to indicate the second floor. There were four policemen. Three constables and a sergeant, all dressed in the khaki shirts and shorts, with the black Sam Brown belts, the military caps and high socks made so familiar throughout the world by the British. The large chevrons of the sergeant seemed to bristle.

“Shots, Nathan?”

“Two. No one has come down, Sergeant.”

“Someday we will have to close you down,” the sergeant said.

With that, the sergeant led two of his men up the front stairs. The third policeman remained on guard at the foot of the rear stairs. The sergeant and his men, covering each other, went from room to room on the second floor.

They found the dead man in room 202.

The sergeant looked at the dead man on the floor, then at the man standing in the center of the room with his pistol still in his hand.

“Good evening, sergeant,” the man said.

He was a tall man, broad and athletic. His jet-black hair was cropped short, and he wore a simple white linen suit. But his face was a face the

sergeant stared at. A face the sergeant knew only too well. The sergeant blinked, began to stammer.

“Sir! I—”

The tall man smiled. “I have touched nothing, Sergeant. All remains as it was. You will note the pistol in the dead man’s hand. It has been fired once. Luckily, I came armed and am a better shot.”

“Yes—Yessir!” the sergeant stammered.

“Get hold of yourself, Sergeant. You have your duty to do. Take my weapon and call your superiors at once.”

The sergeant nodded, took the pistol from the tall man, and barked an order to one of his men to call the inspector. Then he turned and saluted the tall man.

“If Your Excellency will be seated,” the sergeant said, “Inspector Tembo will be here immediately.”

The tall man, M.M. Roy, Premier of Zambala, sat down and lit a long cigarette.

Some hours later, dawn beginning to break over the port city of San Pablo, the fog blown away on the dawn wind, Inspector James Tembo completed his interrogation of the premier at the central police station of the city.

Tembo rubbed a gaunt chin as he closed his book.

“That should do it, Your Excellency. The dead man has been identified as Pandit Tavvi, a known leader of the Stengali. You say you went to that room to meet with the Stengali?”

The premier nodded. “I did, Inspector. Foolish, perhaps, to go alone. But I will try almost anything to bring the Stengali back into the main stream of Zambalan life. You know that has always been my cherished policy. The continued terrorist opposition of the Stengali is a frightful scar on our country. We must all work together. Zamyatta has accepted the role of peaceful opposition. Why not the Stengali?”

Tembo scratched his chin. The inspector was a small, bright man with quick eyes. “Not, I fear, as long as Max Steng lives. I have met him. He is a man of absolutely rigid principle, and he opposes you.”

The premier began to pace. “I know! That is why I went. They said that Steng would be there. We were friends once. But I should have known better. Only Tavvi was there. Luckily I do not appear to have lost my touch with the pistol.”

“No,” Tembo said. “Tavvi was a professional assassin, too.”

“I was very foolish.”

Tembo rubbed his thin chin. “It seems that your security chief was more foolish.”

The premier turned to face Tembo. “Mura Khan? What—”

“He was killed less than ten minutes after you killed Tavvi, Your Excellency,” Tembo said. “Shot on the street. My men have a Stengali in jail. He was found at the scene. He denies the killing, of course, but we know he is a Stengali.”

Premier Roy paced the office. “I was wrong then. They must be destroyed. But it must be justice, not a political act.”

The premier faced Tembo. “Well, are you going to charge me?”

“Charge you, sir?”

“Inspector, I have killed a man! There must be a full investigation. No man is above the law in Zambala! You will charge me. I will post proper bail. I will suspend myself from office until exonerated. Deputy Premier Gomez will act in my place.”

“But sir, it is obviously self-defense.”

“An inquiry is required, is it not? Then there will be an inquiry. I want the same treatment you will give that Stengali suspected of killing Mura Khan. Further, since we seem to be dealing with a series of assassinations by the Stengali, I will recommend to Gomez that he form an international tribunal to oversee the investigation. I will have him appoint Carlos Ramirez as chairman!”

Tembo seemed excited. “Your Excellency, this will be good for Zambala. No one above the law! And Carlos Ramirez! Our greatest man and greatest poet! May I also suggest Martin O’Hara?”

“Good,” Roy said. “That will show how impartial we in Zambala are. O’Hara is one of our oldest colonial families. Now, shall we get on with it,

Inspector?”

The inspector stood up and bowed the premier out, to be charged like any common criminal. Within an hour all of San Pablo knew what had happened; within three hours all of Zambala knew. There was a great outcry against the Stengali underground organization.

The streets of San Pablo were jammed with cheering students. The army declared itself solidly behind the premier. Carlos Ramirez, the old pacifist, poet, and national hero of Zambala, accepted the post of chairman of the international tribunal to investigate the situation.

The whole world applauded the action.

Some time later, alone in his office, Inspector Tembo made a telephone call.

The man Tembo called, Martin O’Hara took the message in his old house high on a hill overlooking San Pablo, hung up, and went straight to a bookcase in his elegant library. He touched the bookcase, and it opened. He went through the opening. The secret door closed behind him.

He stood alone in a bright room lined with steel and heavily soundproofed. Instruments, filing cabinets, maps and communication equipment filled the first room. Along a windowless corridor there were unmarked doors into other rooms, the doors having neither knobs nor visible locks.

In the first room Martin O’Hara went directly to a large electronic console and flipped a switch.

“Code ten. Code ten. Agent O’Hara, Section two Chief in Zambala on direct relay to Waverly in New York. Code ten. Come in, Mr. Waverly.”

# TWO

San Pablo Prison is a combination of old and new. The center part of the building that stands on the side of a hill just south of the city is the grim

old original prison from the pirate days. The two wings are more modern, built within the last twenty years to hold the enemies of the colonial government before independence.

As with all buildings in San Pablo that are more than simple dwellings, the prison stands only four stories high. This is earthquake country, and four stories is as high as should be built. In the case of the prison, the hill rises steeply behind the old center section, and the hill itself touches the building up to the third floor.

It was from a cell on the third floor of the old part of the prison that the Stengali escaped, two days after the murder of the Security Chief Mura Khan. The hour was late and the night was dark. The Stengali made his break when a guard carelessly entered his cell to gather up his plate when he thought the Stengali was asleep.

The Stengali easily overpowered the guard, locked him in his cell, and made his way to an unbarred window in the guard room at the rear of the third floor. By chance, the guard room was empty at this time. The Stengali easily got out through the window and dropped the few feet to the hillside behind the prison.

The Stengali was halfway up the hill when the guard on the roof spotted him. Another fifty feet and he would have made good his escape. But the machine-guns of the guards on the roof cut him down. Before the guards could reach him to see if he was alive, he finished their work with his stolen pistol rather than be taken alive again.

The guards carried the body back into the prison. They were not happy. They had let him escape. They had let him take a pistol. Now he was dead and could not be questioned. They were very quiet as they carried him back into the prison.

The night returned to darkness and to silence.

A man stepped from a clump of trees at the top of the hill behind the prison. This man stood in this night and watched the guard carry the dead Stengali back into the prison.

He was a strange figure in the night as the moon rose above San Pablo.

He was an old man, stooped and with a twisted left arm. One eye was covered with an evil-looking patch. His face was scarred like some rutted

old road, and his hair was white and hung down over his face in ragged strings. His clothes were rags, and his feet were wrapped in filthy cloths. He carried a long, thick staff which he leaned on as he stared down the hill at the silent prison.

Suddenly, he seemed to raise his hand to his lips and bite the knuckle of his thumb. At the same time he seemed to bow his head toward the dark bulk of the prison. Then he turned sharply and moved off down the hill toward the road on the other side of the prison. He moved with amazing agility for a man so old and crippled.

As he reached the road, he stood clear in the moonlight for a long moment. It was then that the cup suspended around his neck was visible, and the mark on his left hand that told the world he was a beggar!

A strange beggar. Moments after he reached the road a long, black car glided all but silently up and the old beggar got in. The car drove off into San Pablo.

The old beggar, intent first on the prison and then on the car that came for him, had not seen the other events his appearance on the hill had set in motion.

The moment the old beggar had started down the hill, another man had appeared from out of the night near the prison. This man was tall and dressed all in black. He followed the old beggar to the road and vanished into the dark trees between the road and the prison.

As he crossed a patch of moonlight his face showed briefly—or did not show!

The second man, dressed all in black, was masked! A black mask covered his entire face except his eyes, and his dark hat was pulled low over his face. When the long car picked up the beggar, the man in black followed form the trees in a jeep that had been carefully hidden there.

The third man had been seen by neither of the other two.

He was a small, slender man also dressed all in black, but neither masked nor did he wear a hat. In the dark he followed both the beggar and the masked man, his blond hair catching the moonlight from time to time. As he watched the beggar reach the road, and the masked man vanish

among the trees, his quick and bright eyes narrowed beneath an habitually lowered brow.

With the silence and agility of a cat, he moved closer to the road and the beggar. Beneath the unruly blond hair, cut like the round haircut of some modern knight-errant, his handsome Slavic face was both quizzical and a trifle amused. He was about to move even closer when the black car appeared and picked up the beggar.

Immediately, the jeep emerged from the trees with the masked man driving and followed the black car toward San Pablo. The small blond man ran swiftly to the road. He bent down where a drainage culvert ran beneath the road and drew out a motorcycle. In an instant he was on the cycle and roaring off after both the black car and the jeep.

As he rode he guided the motorcycle with one hand. With the other hand he drew a pencil-like object from his pocket, pressed a tiny button, and spoke.

“Report to Zambala Headquarters. Agent Kuryakin following two men. Stengali suspected of murdering Mura Khan has been killed trying to escape. Both men being followed were at the scene. One is an old man dressed as a beggar, one eye and a twisted left arm. The second man is dressed in black and is masked. See what you have on them and check with New York.”

There was a shot silence as the motorcycle sped through the night. Then the pencil-radio spoke low in the voice of Martin O’Hara.

“Roger. Check will be run, Illya. And be careful. The Stengali usually dress in black. They are very dangerous. They would have been watching the prison.”

Illya Kuryakin concentrated on following the jeep ahead, and beyond the jeep the black car. The road was deserted here at the edge of the city, and the small blond U.N.C.L.E. agent was riding the motorcycle with the lights out.

“That Stengali was our only lead to the assassination plots,” he said into the pencil-radio.

“I know,” O’Hara said from the hidden rooms of local U.N.C.L.E. headquarters inside his house. “Wait. Here is the check. All negative. From

your descriptions neither men are in our files, but the computer emphasizes that the Stengali often dress in black."

"Thank the computer for me," Illya said dryly. "Get the descriptions to New York and see what we might have there. Report that I am continuing to follow."

"Very well, Illya, but be careful," O'Hara said.

Illya clicked off his pencil-instrument and returned it to his pocket. As he did so he took his eyes form the road for an instant. When he looked up again it was too late.

The jeep was slewed directly across the road!

The masked man was already firing an ugly Soviet-made submachine gun.

By the reflex action that had saved him so many times, Illya swerved his motorcycle directly toward the ditch that bordered the dark road and began to hurl himself sideways.

Again, he was too late.

The motorcycle struck the long, thick root of a tree and Illya Kuryakin hurtled helpless through the air in the dark night.

# THREE

Behind the innocent facade of New York brownstones, and the one modern yellow-brick building, the impregnable complex of the headquarters of The United Network Command for Law and Enforcement goes about its never-ending battle to keep the world safe for the ordinary citizen. This battle requires all the complex and secret equipment that fill the secret rooms, the vast network of communications that keep New York in touch with all the other far-flung centers of U.N.C.L.E. And the task of protecting the ordinary citizens of the world requires many extraordinary citizens.

Every hour of the day these extraordinary men go in and out of the entrance to Del Floria's cleaning & Tailoring Shop, unnoticed by the citizens they protect. They go in and out by any of the other three known entrances to the U.N.C.L.E. complex, or by one of the secret river tunnels from the river to the lower level of U.N.C.L.E. headquarters.

One of the most extraordinary of these men, the only man in New York who knows the location of the fifth entrance to U.N.C.L.E., is Alexander Waverly, Chief of U.N.C.L.E. in the western hemisphere, the only member of Section I—Policy and Operations in the western world.

Another of the more extraordinary men was Napoleon Solo, Chief Enforcement Agent in Section II—Operations and Enforcement. Solo, dressed as always in the impeccable young executive clothes that made him seem no more than another handsome young bachelor and successful junior executive, now sat with Alexander Waverly in the small but complete office of the Chief.

Through the windows there was a fine view of the city in the afternoon sun, and anyone looking in would have seen no more than a businessman talking to one of his assistants. The windows, of course, were never opened, and the glass was bulletproof.

Waverly himself, a gentleman over fifty but no one knew how far over, was the picture of the tweedy management man. His iron grey hair was neat if shaggy. He held an unlighted pipe, and turned the gaze of an aristocratic bloodhound on Solo.

"The last report of Mr.—uh—Kuryakin indicated that he was following two men who had been watching the San Pablo prison. Our records came up with nothing on either man, I'm afraid."

"And the Stengali prisoner was killed," Solo said. "Our only lead to what might be happening down there."

"Shot escaping, I'm afraid," Waverly said. "A pity. Although I understand the Stengali have a suicide rule if hopelessly captured."

"Shot while escaping can be arranged," Solo said.

Waverly looked for his matches in his waistcoat pocket. "I'm aware of that, Mr. Solo. That is precisely why Mr. Kuryakin is following those men."

Waverly found his matches on his desk and began to light his pipe. The unruffled chief puffed fitfully, his flat eyes and tweedy manner exactly like those of some absent-minded professor. The chief sat behind his desk and Solo faced him across it. The handsome and slender enforcement chief presented his usual relaxed, almost boyish manner that hid his deadly skills as an agent.

“Just what does O’Hara suspect down there?” Solo asked.

Waverly managed to get his pipe lighted and waved out the flame of his match. “He hasn’t the slightest idea. The situation appears most confused. As you know, the international tribunal called by Deputy Premier Gomez has met only once. O’Hara reports that something is quite odd. The Stengali do not usually use assassination, but hey might have started. What O’Hara cannot quite fathom is why this all began just now. However, he does feel that the evidence points to the involvement of Zamyatta.”

Solo rubbed his nose. “Perhaps you had better -”

“Fill you in, as you young men say? Yes, I suppose I should do just that.”

Waverly swiveled in his chair, pressed a button on his desk. A screen appeared on the wall. Waverly pressed a second button, leaned down, and said, “The Zambala file, if you please, Miss—uh—Heatherly.”

Napoleon Solo sighed as he always did when he heard the name of the beautiful red-headed Communications and Research Chief, Section IV. May was so beautiful, so efficient, so tantalizing. Solo sighed again and put his mind back on business. At this moment, business was the picture of a tall black-haired, muscular and handsome man on the screen.

May Heatherly’s maddeningly efficient voice intoned, “M.M. Roy, the Lion of Zambala, now premier. Roy was the leader of the Liberation Army against the British. When the British granted independence, Roy was elected premier without opposition. He has been re-elected once, two years ago.”

Solo narrowed his eyes. “An election coming up?”

“No. I’m afraid not,” Waverly said. “Zambala, like most ex-British colonies, operates on the parliamentary system. A general election is not due for four more years.”

“But an election could be forced at any time by a vote of no confidence, or by the premier himself?” Solo said.

“Yes, of course. Next, Miss Heatherly,” Waverly said.

Another picture flashed on the screen. It was the picture of a short, heavy, bull-like man about the same age as the premier himself. The man was much darker and his face showed two long scars.

“Jemi Zamyatta,” May Heatherly said crisply. “Leader of the opposition. Zamyatta’s real name is unknown. He took his present name during the struggle for liberation. After independence, he was unanimously elected president. He resigned two years ago to oppose Roy for premier. He lost. Since then he has acted as an apparently loyal opposition from his seat in Parliament.”

Waverly waved his pipe. “You realize that the post of president is purely ceremonial in Zambala, amounted to putting Zamyatta on the shelf. Apparently he didn’t like it and came out against Roy. Zamyatta has had Soviet training; he does not like many of the concessions granted by Roy to Western countries and businessmen.”

“He’s a communist?”

Waverly studied his pipe. “that is one thing we have to learn. There is no official Communist Party in Zambala, and Zamyatta has shown no heavy leanings toward the East. But one of the things O’Hara seems to fear is that he may be moving much farther left.”

“Assassination?” Solo said.

Waverly nodded slowly, his impassive face showing no emotion at all. “O’Hara seems to have proof that Zamyatta is involved in these supposed Stengali actions.” Waverly now looked at his chief agent. “You realize just what a Communist government in Zambala would mean—especially under a militant Zamyatta? It could destroy the effectiveness of half the defenses of the Western world—and lead them straight into the heart of South America!”

# FOUR

Illya Kuryakin hurtled through the air in the dark Zambala night. The bullets cut the air around him. Still in the air, the lithe agent doubled over and landed curled into a ball. He bounced twice and came to rest in the dark of the ditch.

Instantly he was on his knees, crouched and ready, his U.N.C.L.E. Special out. There was a sound to his left. He moved and circled toward the left; he had no time to wait for his assailant to come to him. He caught a glimpse of the black-masked man moving toward him. The man had removed his mask! A sharp, arrogant face.

Illya worked his way around in the night until, through the movements of both of them, he was to the left and behind the stalking man. Cautiously, Illya stalked him in turn in the night. But the man was no amateur. He heard Illya, guessed what was happening, and went to cover. With a sudden grin, the blond U.N.C.L.E. agent let go with a burst from his Special, set on automatic.

The man had vanished, pinned down. Illya Kuryakin was now between the man and the road. The black car was still moving away. Illya had no time to waste on the man who had spotted him. He fired another burst and broke for the road at full speed.

He did not even look at his motorcycle. He raced to the jeep and jumped in. As he had expected, the keys were still in the ignition. He started the jeep and roared away in the night, just as the masked man ran out onto the road. The last volley from the man’s submachine gun whistled harmlessly above Illya’s head.

With a wave, Illya pressed down on the gas and the jeep leaped ahead.

Soon he was in the city itself. There was more traffic now, and he saw the black car ahead. It was easy to spot, and his photographic memory had already memorized the license plate. He carefully brought the jeep closer and continued to follow the black car through the night streets of San Pablo.

The car moved at an easy pace through the capital city, with Illya following at a respectful distance. The chase seemed to wander erratically along the crowded main avenues and through dark side streets.

But as he drove the jeep, Illya became aware of the fact that no matter how much the black car turned and twisted, it always headed in the end closer to the harbor.

When the black car finally stopped, the dark water of the harbor stretched silent in the night to Illya's right. He parked the jeep some fifty yards away from the black car at the edge of the water. He watched as three men got out of the black car and walked into a small waterfront tavern set out over the harbor on wooden pilings.

The beggar was not one of them. All three men who got out of the black car were dressed in business suits. They entered the tavern like any other patrons out for a night of pleasure. Illya waited until the door of the tavern had closed behind them. Then he moved swiftly past the black car.

The car had a man still in the front seat.

In the dark night his eyes looked from under his lowered brows at the tavern. A sign above the door read simply: Harbor Inn. Illya returned his attention to the black car. There was nothing inside the car to give him any clue as to the fate of the old beggar. Only the driver slumped down, eyes closed.

Illya crouched down in the night beside the black car and took out his pencil-radio. He pressed the send button.

"Code ten. Kuryakin to O'Hara. Relay to Waverly, New York."

The pencil whispered in the night. "O'Hara here. Waverly standing by on relay."

Illya crisply reported what had happened to the masked man in black, and to the beggar. "It appears that the beggar either left the car during the time I was evading the masked man, or else his outfit was a disguise."

Waverly sucked on his pipe and arched a bushy eyebrow in the direction of Napoleon Solo as they listened to the direct relay from Illya Kuryakin in far-off San Pablo.

“It is somewhat important whether the beggar eluded you or is one of the men in that tavern, Mr. Kuryakin,” Waverly said drily into his transmitter in the small office. “I suggest you get on to it. What is your estimate of the masked man? Was he trying to stop you on his own, or was he covering for the beggar?”

“I don’t know that yet,” Illya’s voice said from beside the black car in San Pablo.

“I expect you will,” Waverly said. “Report to me when you do know.”

“Yes sir,” Illya said, and clicked off.

Waverly replaced his microphone on the edge of the large communications console and turned to Solo. The bushy eyebrows of the chief were knotted in concentration. He sucked on his pipe, began his perennial search for matches in his pockets.

“One of those men was certainly a Stengali. The question is—which one, and who is the other man? Unless, of course, they are both Stengali covering each other.”

“It doesn’t sound like it from their actions,” Solo said.

Waverly found his matches. “No, it doesn’t, does it? Well, I expect Mr. Kuryakin will report on that soon enough. Meanwhile, we have Mr. O’Hara to keep close touch with the affairs of the Stengali.”

“Could Zamyatta have joined forces with the Stengali?” Solo said.

“That is a distinct possibility, and not a pleasant one. Zambala is a key link in the entire Western Hemisphere defense.”

“Just what is the Stengali?” Solo asked.

Waverly managed to light his pipe again. “If you would spend more time in our library, Mr. Solo, and less time with the young lady librarian, you would know. However, I will not press the matter. Miss Heatherly, if you please.”

Another picture flashed onto the wall screen in the small office of the U.N.C.L.E. Chief. It was a picture of a small, wiry man about forty years old. His beard was thin, little more than a wisp on his chin, and his eyes were large and deep—the powerful eyes of a fanatic, yet not at all insane. The clear power of a dedicated man was in those eyes.

“Max Steng,” Waverly said. “Little is known of his early history, except that he is not a native Zambalan. There are those who think he was born in New York, but his birthplace is usually given as London. He was another of the leaders against the British. But unlike either M.M. Roy or Zamyatta, he always refused to deal in any way. From the start he led an armed band. He has said that he will settle for nothing but complete independence, complete autonomy, and complete neutrality.”

“A difficult goal these days,” Solo remarked drily.

“Steng is a difficult man, Mr. Solo,” Waverly said. “He is also extremely astute. He broke with M.M. Roy when he guessed that Roy was going to make a deal with the British. He broke with Zamyatta less than a year later, with the curt pronouncement that Zamyatta was only the tails to Roy’s heads. He refused any part in the new government and went underground.”

“I gather he is still there?” Solo asked.

“Perhaps, Mr. Solo. The rumors are many. You can take your pick. Steng has been reported dead, in Russia, in China, in Africa. His underground has been reported disbanded, doubled. All I know for certain is that Max Steng is a military genius, especially at guerilla warfare. I doubt that he is dead. I imagine that the Stengali are very much alive, and that is not good for the Western world.”

“What does Steng have against Roy?” Solo said.

“Primarily his retention of some British influence and aid, and Roy’s close ties with the West. Our missile bases, for example. Steng wants complete neutrality. He has his own theories of government, as most fanatics do. The danger, obviously, is that Steng and his Stengali might be used by someone else. His methods have always been to take over small areas and apply his theories. He has never used assassination. If he has now turned to methodical assassination as a weapon, then—”

“Then someone else may be directing him and his gang,” Solo completed.

“Precisely,” Waverly said. “And not necessarily another power or government. Zambala is highly strategically placed.”

“THRUSH?” Solo said.

“The possibility has occurred to me,” Waverly said. “Steng might be just the man to be fooled by THRUSH suggesting a third-road government.”

“Is there any hint of THRUSH?”

“No, I must say there isn’t—yet. As it stands, Premier Roy has been forced to kill a would-be assassin, and Mura Khan, Security Chief of Zambala, has been assassinated. Both the man Roy killed, and the man who was suspected of killing Mura Khan, were known members of the Stengali. O’Hara seems to think there is some connection between Zamyatta and the Stengali now. O’Hara also reported that Inspector Tembo was not happy with the whole affair. All in all, Mr. Solo, it adds up to a state of unrest in Zambala, and that is something we do not want.”

“What about this international tribunal?” Solo said. “Can they do anything?”

Waverly puffed on his pipe. “Perhaps. I think the tribunal is primarily a good move by Premier Roy to forestall civil violence. The Zambalans are hot-blooded. But a tribunal may make them feel the situation is being handled fairly. Especially with Ramirez heading the tribunal. Miss Heatherly, please.”

A fourth picture flashed onto the screen. It was the picture of an old man, tall and white-haired, the epitome of a Spanish grandee of the old school.

The eyes were strong and alert, and the man leaned heavily on a cane.

Waverly smiled as he looked at this picture. “Carlos Ramirez, Mr. Solo. A living legend,” he said. “The greatest poet of South America, a fighter in all causes of freedom, and a life-long pacifist. A truly amazing man, Carlos Ramirez. I have had the privilege of meeting him many times. He began life as a landowner and grandee, inherited the largest sugar plantation of the island, built it into many businesses.

“Then, in middle-age, he became a poet and world-renowned pacifist. Still later, when the struggles for freedom began, he joined the fight. His leg was shattered by a British bomb. He is the only man I know who has engaged in violence while remaining a pacifist and meaning it. A man of great dignity. With him on the tribunal, the world will take notice.”

“Who are the other members?” Solo asked.

“Two men from the West, one from Poland, one from India. Three Zambalans: Ramirez, O’Hara, and a labor leader named Mark Boya. But Ramirez is the guiding genius.”

“And you want me to go down and stay close to the tribunal?” Solo said.

“Yes. I fear possible attacks on the tribunal itself. We—”

The low beep-beep-beep of overseas communication began to sound from the large console in the small office. Waverly touched a button on his desk. Instantly a voice entered the room, the voice of Martin O’Hara.

“—report a bomb thrown at the tribunal, two injured. Also a second attempt on the life of Premier Roy. Situation urgent; Stengali apparently making all out war. In my opinion they must be getting help, probably from elements of the army.”

Waverly held his microphone. “Any further word from Mr. Kuryakin?”

There was a pause. Then, “Unable to contact agent Kuryakin!”

## FIVE

The Harbor Inn on the waterfront of San Pablo was a small tavern with two rooms and a kitchen in the rear. The first room contained the bar and some tables. The second room, through an archway, contained booths on either side. The kitchen opened to the rear of this second room.

Less than an hour after they had left the black car, the three men in business suits sat in a rear booth. They looked at their watches from time to time. They did not notice the shabby dock-worker who limped into the tavern and stood leaning on the bar at the end nearest the rear room.

This dock-worker was small and slender, and his black hair was cut thick and long. His nose was heavy and broken, and there was a long scar on his dark face. His clothes were the rags worn by the poor of San Pablo. He drank the cheapest raw rum made for the poor from the dregs of the sugar cane. To look at he was no different from thousands of other poor workers of San Pablo. Even his limp was common in a country where the poor worked hard and were often injured.

But his eyes were not the eyes of a San Pablo dock-worker. They were sharp eyes, shrewd and glittering and they were blue!

They were the eyes of Illya Kuryakin.

Kuryakin watched the three men.

He watched them for an hour before the other two men came into the Harbor Inn.

The two newcomers were a grotesque contrast. The man who came in last was broad and powerful and held his hand in his suit pocket. The man who walked in front of the broad man was small and frightened. This small man wore a white suit and his hands shook. His eyes darted around like some small animal looking for escape. There was no escape.

The scared man was marched to the booth where the three men waited.

The man in the booth who spoke was obviously the leader.

“Sit down, Nathan,” the man said.

Where he leaned on the bar Illya watched this man, the one who had spoken. He saw that this man was of average height, not big but in good condition, with the movements of a trained soldier. His hair was grey and long. There were scars on his face. He could have been the old beggar with a patch over his eye and a certain amount of make-up.

“Give Mr. Bedford room to sit down,” the man said to his companions.

Illya Kuryakin immediately turned his attention to the small man who was so frightened. Nathan Bedford! That was the name of the owner of The Morgan House, the cheap hotel where Premier Roy had killed the Stengali leader, Tavvi. A very frightened Nathan Bedford. The owner of the hotel sat down like a man sitting on the edge of a very high cliff. The grey-haired man with the scarred face smiled pleasantly.

“So, Nathan,” the grey-haired man said. “It has been a long time. Alas, we do not get into San Pablo often.”

“Too long, Mr. Smith,” the frightened Bedford said.

“We were always friends, Nathan.”

“Of course, Mr. Smith. The best,” the terrified owner said.

“Then you will tell me all about what really happened the night the premier shot Tavvi, won’t you?”

“Sure, sure, Mr. Smith,” Bedford stammered. “Only I was downstairs. You know I stay downstairs. I didn’t see—”

“Suppose I judge that? You just start from the very beginning. Now, who paid for that room?”

Bedford licked his dry lips. “Tembo asked me that, too. I don’t know. It was a woman. She wore a veil. She came in and took the room from my assistant. She gave her name as Brown. Then—”

The frightened owner suddenly lowered his voice and bent closer to the man he called Mr. Smith. At the bar Illya moved closer, then started for a booth. He saw the eyes of the other men with Mr. Smith watching him closely. Instead of stopping at a booth he continued on back to the men’s room near the kitchen.

When he came out, Bedford was already standing up. The grey-haired man called Mr. Smith was still seated and staring up at Bedford. The hotel owner was as pale as a ghost. Then Smith waved his hand.

“All right, Nathan. But try to remember a little more, eh?”

“Yes, Mr. Smith. Anything I remember.”

“Good,” the grey-haired Mr. Smith said. “See Nathan to the door, Sergeant.”

The broad, powerful man nodded to Bedford and the two men headed for the door. Illya, passing the booth on his way back to the bar, limping in his dock-worker’s rags, heard the use of the rank. Smith had called his man Sergeant! Then the men from the black car, the beggar, and the powerful man were all members of some military unit!

At the bar, Illya ordered another of the cheapest rums, and paid for it, just as the powerful man returned. Illya watched the men from the black car put their heads together in the booth for a conference.

Then he heard it.

A faint, strangled cry.

Low or distant, it was impossible to tell which.

But Illya had heard the cry, there was no doubt. And he was not the only one. In the booth the men in business suits stopped talking and sat alert. The bartender stopped mixing a drink to stare at the door. Two other men at the bar turned.

Illya was on his way to the door. He reached it and went through on the run. He saw the cause of the cry in the middle of the street.

Nathan Bedford lay there. Illya did not have to go to the man. Bedford lay on his back with his throat cut wide open, a pool of blood spreading from him.

There was no one else on the street.

But far down the dark waterfront Illya thought he saw a tall black figure running silently away. He watched the figure until he became aware of something behind him.

The disguised U.N.C.L.E. agent whirled. The men from the black car stood close behind him. They were looking at the body of Nathan Bedford, and at Illya. They were looking at his leg. Too late Illya realized his mistake. In his haste to get out and find the source of the strangled cry he had forgotten to limp.

Now the grey-haired man, Mr. Smith, raised his hand slowly and pointed to Illya’s eyes. In making his disguise there had been no time to disguise his eyes with contact lenses. His eyes were blue! Black hair and a dark skin and the rags of a native Zambalan dock-worker—with blue eyes.

The men came toward him with their hands in their pockets.

Illya looked around quickly. Behind him two more men in business suits. Illya wasted no time. He reached into his pockets and dropped the small smoke bomb.

As the smoke exploded, raising a blinding smoke screen, Illya turned with his U.N.C.L.E. Special out and ran toward the two men behind him. His Special set on sleep-darts, he shot one of the men at once. The other hurled himself sideways and clawed for his pistol. Illya shot him. He leaped over the prostrate forms of the two men and raced away down the street.

The black car, its lights on, blocked his path. He whirled and raced toward the water. As he reached the edge of the water a light flashed on him

from below, from some boat. To escape the light, Illya ducked and began to run to his right.

The land ended abruptly in a sharp right turn.

Illya whirled. They were all around him. Something struck his head and it all turned green and red and—black.

In New York, Alexander Waverly sucked on his cold pipe and slowly paced his silent office. The outer door slid open. Napoleon Solo entered. The face of the handsome young chief agent of Section II showed concern. Waverly wasted no time on useless words.

“O’hara reports that all attempts to contact Kuryakin have failed. Two of his agents discovered that a man named Nathan Bedford was killed in the street on the San Pablo waterfront.”

“The owner of The Morgan House,” Solo said.

“Precisely,” Waverly agreed. “The police have no clues. The patrons of the Harbor Inn, a waterfront tavern nearby, claim to have heard nothing.”

“Naturally,” Solo said.

“They claim further that a crippled dock-worker ran out of the Harbor Inn about the time of the killing. They said he ran, although he seemed to be crippled.”

“Illya!” Solo said.

“O’Hara agrees. The men he sent found a black wig floating in the water nearby. I should say that Mr. Kuryakin is in need of help.”

“I’ll be on a plane in an hour,” Solo said.

Waverly nodded. “Yes. See that you are. But remember, Mr. Solo, your primary mission in Zambala is to find out what is behind these assassinations and attempts. That comes first. if you have time, see what you can do for Mr. Kuryakin, but the mission is first, as always.”

“Yes, sir.”

Waverly began to light his pipe. “I rather imagine Mr. Kuryakin can take good care of himself. In a way, this may be all in our favor. I trust Mr. Kuryakin is learning much.”

“Yes, sir,” Solo said as he left.

The cold manner of his chief did not fool him. Waverly was as concerned as he was about Illya, but Waverly headed an organization charged with saving the world from itself if necessary, and one agent was only one agent.

To Napoleon Solo it was different. This agent was Illya Kuryakin.

*

Illya Kuryakin opened his eyes. The blond agent grimaced at the pain in his head. He felt his head and found a soft and sticky wound. He tired to rise and found his feet tied securely.

A voice spoke. “Now tell us who you are and who you work for.”

Illya looked across the room. Seated on a chair in the room that was not a room but a cave, was a small, wiry man of about forty. The man was dressed all in black with some kind of military insignia on shoulder straps. The man held a pistol and wore soft black boots.

Next to the small, wiry man stood the grey-haired Mr. Smith.

“I’m a voodoo doll,” Illya said.

The small, wiry man stood up and came close to Illya. The blond U.N.C.L.E. agent looked up at the man. He saw that the small man wore a thin beard that was almost white, a wisp of long hair on the man’s chin. And the eyes that looked down at Illya were large and deep, the powerful eyes of a fanatic.

“Tell us who you are,” the man said softly.

Behind the small, wiry man with the wisp of beard there were many other men wearing black uniforms in the silent cave.

# ACT II: GO, BID THE SOLDIERS SHOOT!

## ONE

POLICE headquarters in San Pablo is the lower two floors of the left wing of the prison. At night there is only a guard at a desk just inside the door. Police are there, but the corridors are dim and quiet during late night hours.

This night, the single guard dozed at his desk. Since the murder of Nathan Bedford, the police had been working hard and the guard had done a double shift. With the murder, the assassination attempts on the premier, and the threat of a Stengali war, the San Pablo police were short-handed and the guard did not hear the soft footsteps approach him.

He cam alert just long enough to see the boyish young man leap on him and hold the cloth over his mouth.

The guard asleep, Napoleon Solo stepped over his prostrate form dn. moved on into the building. There were low voices talking somewhere as Solo moved as silent as a cat along the dim halls. The office of Inspector Tembo was on the second floor in the rear.

As yet the involvement of U.N.C.L.E. in the affairs of Zambala was not known, and Solo intended to keep it that way. He wanted to talk to Inspector Tembo, but first he wanted to search the office of the inspector. Tembo was aware of the true identity of Martin O'Hara, and had tacitly called U.N.C.L.E. into the matter. Solo wanted to know why.

He moved quickly up the stairs to the second floor. The long corridor was empty. There was no sound. At the far end of the corridor light showed

under the door of one office. Solo moved catlike along the corridor. The door that showed light was Inspector Tembo's office!

Solo frowned. Tembo was in his office. There would be no opportunity to search. He put his U.N.C.L.E. Special away in its shoulder holster and stepped to the door. For some reason, some sixth sense perhaps, he opened the door quietly and without knocking.

It was a small office with a single window and the ground of the hill behind the prison close outside the window. There were two straight chairs, filing cabinets, and a small wooden desk. But it was not the furniture nor the office itself that Solo saw first.

And it was not Inspector Tembo.

The chair behind the desk was empty.

The window was open.

And behind the desk, studying papers on the desk, stood a tall, slender woman wearing a black uniform!

The woman heard him the instant he saw her. She looked up. Solo saw that she wore a black hood as a mask, only her sharp eyes visible through the eye-holes. Green eyes. Solo reached for his Special. The woman did not wait. Her hand snaked into her pocket and came out with a round, black object.

Solo threw himself backwards, his Special out.

There was no chance to fire.

The woman dropped the black object and a thick cloud of dark smoke filled the small office.

Choking, Solo backed out of the office and dug in his pocket. He brought out his miniature gas mask, opened it, and placed it over his nose and mouth. He ran back into the office and through the thick smoke.

The office was empty.

Solo went through the window in a single leap. Ahead up the hill the woman ran. She turned at the crest and fired. Solo dived for the dirt. The bullet whistled past his ear. He was up and running. At the crest of the hill he looked down. The woman was vanishing into a slump of trees. Solo raced down after her.

They came out of the trees.

Four of them—men wearing black uniforms, their ugly Soviet submachine guns in their hands and pointing up the hill at Solo.

The U.N.C.L.E. agent skidded to a halt on the steep downslope.

The four men began to move toward him up the hill.

*

Illya Kuryakin awoke and they were there again. The small, wiry man with the wisp of beard. The grey-haired man called Mr. Smith. The silent guards in the black uniforms. Illya struggled up to a sitting position on the cold floor of the cave.

They had been questioning him for hours. He had no idea what time it was, whether it was night or day, whether days had passed or only hours. As soon as he slept, they awakened him and it began again. The questions.

“Tell us who you are and who you work for,” the small man with the thin wisp of beard asked quietly.

“No,” Illya said, his voice a croak now, his throat dry for lack of water.

“Why are you in Zambala? Who sent you?” the man named Mr. Smith asked.

Illya said nothing. They were the same questions. Behind the two men who asked the same questions over and over, Illya saw the guards as silent and motionless as ever. There was nothing else, only the blank stone walls of the cave, the steel door behind the guard, and beyond the door, what?

“You were following the beggar? Why?” the man with the wisp or beard asked.

“You were watching the prison. Why?” the man named Mr. Smith asked.

Illya’s weary mind came alert. These were new questions! There had been a sudden change, a shift in questions, as if the men in front of him thought that it was time to change, that his resistance was ebbing and a sudden shift would confuse him.

Illya fought to keep his mind steady, because they were almost right. The hours were beginning to work on him. He battled within his mind to keep control.

“Tell us why you were there at the prison,” the man with the thin beard said. “What did you suspect?”

“What made you interested?” Mr. Smith said.

“What do you know about Premier Roy?”

“What was Pandit Tavvi doing in that room?”

“Why was Tavvi killed?”

“Who sent the premier to that room?”

“Who do you work for”

“Who are you?”

Illya’s mind reeled. No sleep for—how long? Was it day or night? Where was this cave? Where was Napoleon? Illya felt his mind slipping—slipping -slipping—With a powerful effort, unseen by the pounding questioners, he moved his free forearm across one of the rings on his right hand. With his thumb, the thumb of his right hand, he pressed hard against the ring on the inside. He felt the tiny prick.

The needle, which came a hair out from the ring when he pressed against the inside of the ring, pricked his forearm. He hung on, forcing his brain to remain alert. Ten seconds—twenty seconds.

Almost a minute, and the questions continued to reel against his brain. Then he felt it, the powerful drug coursing through his body, the emergency drug intended for just such a situation, to be used only in extremity because of its side-effects.

The drug entered his brain and, suddenly, he felt no more fatigue, no weariness, no slipping of his senses. He felt strong, alert, in complete control. He showed none of this to his interrogators. Instead he continued to pretend that he was on the edge of breaking.

“What really happened at The Morgan House?” the man with the wisp of beard said.

“Why was Tavvi there?” Mr. Smith said.

Illya listened now, his brain clear, more than clear. Alert, he heard the questions. They were asking him what they should have known! Pandit Tavvi was one of the Stengali, and these men had to be the Stengali—or did they? He had been sure that these were the Stengali, but now—if they were the Stengali, why were they asking what had happened I that room of The Morgan House? And if they were not the Stengali, who were they?

*

Napoleon Solo laid down a withering fire from his U.N.C.L.E. Special on automatic. The four men in black went to ground. Instantly, Solo crawled back over the crest of the hill and ran down the hill, back toward the prison. The four men came to the crest of the hill, stood there against the lighter dark of the sky for a moment, and then vanished.

Solo stopped running. He stared back up the hill. There was no doubt; they had stopped their pursuit. He turned and went back to the window, climbed through into the office of Inspector Tembo. His foot struck a soft object behind the desk.

He looked down and saw the body.

The body of a gaunt-faced man of medium height. It had been behind the desk, between the desk and the window, and Solo had not seen it when he pursued the woman. Now he saw it, and he guessed at once who it was. To be sure, he bent down and took out the man’s wallet. The identity card left no doubt: Inspector James Tembo!

Solo stood up and rubbed his chin. He would not have the chance to question Inspector James Tembo. The man had been stabbed once, expertly and finally. Why? Without a doubt so that someone like Solo could not question the inspector.

Which meant that someone knew, or thought, that the inspector had known something important.

What? Solo looked down at the littered desk of the dead man. The woman had been searching the desk when he surprised her. He studied the papers on the desk and found that the folder on top was the folder of the

killing of Pandit Tavvi and Mura Khan. A notation was written across the page in a neat, precise hand:

“Why would Tavvi go to the room alone? Why would Roy go alone? Check movements of P. Tavvi.”

Solo’s eyes glistened as he read the notations—Inspector Tembo had not been satisfied with the explanations of the events in The Morgan House.

But that was all. The rest was the routine report Solo already knew in detail. The agent turned his attention to the office itself. Everything seemed in order. Then his eyes fell on the small object beside the body of Tembo.

Solo bent and picked it up.

It was a matchbook with the name “Jezzi Mahal, The Silver Dunes.” Solo grinned. It looked very much like his masked lady had left her calling card. Solo decided he would pay a call on Miss Jezzi Mahal.

But before that, he would pay a visit to The Harbor Inn. If Illya had not reported in. Solo took out his pencil-radio and pressed the send button.

“Code four. Napoleon Solo to Zambala Control. Come in, Zambala Control.”

The pencil-radio crackled. The voice of O’Hara’s chief assistant was clear, cool, and enticingly female. “Zambala Control. Come in, Agent Solo.”

Solo made a mental note to meet O’Hara’s assistant as soon as possible. “Is there any word yet from Agent Kuryakin?”

“Negative. No contact with Agent Kuryakin since yesterday. Channel of his transmitter has been continuously open,” the low, throaty voice said.

Solo nodded grimly. “Call as soon as there is contact. Make it a priority One, Code ten.”

A priority One was the only call that could break radio silence to an agent on active assignment. “Priority One. Will do. Over and out.”

For a brief moment, Solo imagined the face and form of the female voice. Then he sighed aloud, climbed out the window over the motionless body of Inspector Tembo, and moved swiftly through the night to his car. He drove toward the waterfront and The Harbor Inn.

When he reached the silent and deserted area of the waterfront of San Pablo where The Harbor Inn's lights were gaudy in the night, Solo reached into his attache case on the front seat beside him and took out a small electronic instrument. He parked his car and got out. The instrument in his hand, he started at the door of The Harbor Inn.

The instrument showed no response. He walked away from the inn toward the edge of the water, where the wig had been found floating by O'Hara's men.

The instrument began to register at a spot where the sidewalk turned sharply away from the water. Solo smiled to himself. Illya had left the trail —the private trail of sensitized liquid from his shoes that only Napoleon Solo could pick up on his detector.

Solo returned to his car, and, with the detector set on the dashboard in front of him, picked up the trail and started to drive out of the city. The trail led deep into the hills and jungle to the north of San Pablo.

A half an hour later, thirty miles north of San Pablo, Solo became aware that he was not alone.

The lights of a truck moved steadily behind him.

# TWO

They had come and gone twice more before Illya Kuryakin saw his chance. The last time the black-uniformed guard failed to tie his hands securely, the many tieings and untieings having made the guard careless. After all, how could this small blond man escape from the locked cave room, even if he got his hands free?

Illya smiled grimly to himself—the guard would find out. He waited what he estimated were ten minutes for the routine of the guards to become normal. Then he went to work on his bonds. They were a fraction too loose. By using all his trained skills, the small Russian squeezed his open hand

into the smallest space possible and strained to slip them through the bonds. Sweat stood out in beads on his head.

He strained, drawing his narrowed hand through the ropes—and the hand began to slip. Shaking the sweat from his eyes, the blond U.N.C.L.E. agent forced his hand harder and harder against the loop of the rope.

And his hand slipped out!

Quickly he freed his other hand and bent to the ropes on his feet. Moments later he stood and rubbed the circulation back into his legs.

Now he had to hurry. The stimulant drug would begin to wear off soon, and when it wore off his brain would give out, his muscles would go limp, his control would slip away, and he would sleep for thirty-six hours.

Moving swiftly, his face set in grim concentration, the small blond agent took off his belt and carefully felt the wide leather band. He drew out a flat foil packet, a thin thread, and a long thin wire. He replaced his belt and bent to his left shoe. From the heel of the shoe he took out a round ball the size of a marble. He stood up and crossed the silent stone cell to the steel door.

Bending close, his shrewd eyes alert under his lowered brow, he inspected the lock. He smiled—a single standard lock. He placed the foil packet on the lock of the door where it stuck with its self-adhesive. He attached the thin thread and rubbed it hard. There was a flash of flame and Illya leaped back.

The foil packet began to glow white hot, casting an eerie glare in the stone cell that made the shadow of the blond agent loom large against the stone of the walls. Then the glow ceased. Illya moved silently to the door and opened it. There was no guard outside. Illya stepped out, the long wire in his right hand.

The stone tunnel led to the left. At the far end there was a faint light. Illya glided silently toward the light. The tunnel opened into a small stone room with another steel door on the far side. A single guard sat at a rough table in the room. The guard was reading a book, his British Sten gun on the table in front of him.

Illya was across the room to the table in two quick bounds. The guard heard him and grabbed frantically for his Sten gun. The book slithered away

across the cold stone floor. Illya had the wire looped around the throat of the guard. The guard fought. Illya hung on grimly as the heavier guard thrashed and fell to the floor on top of the small agent.

Illya tightened the wire, drew it closer around the throat of the struggling guard. His hands thrashing, the guard dropped the Sten gun and clawed behind him for Illya's face. His fingernails raked close to the eyes of the grim Russian.

Then his hands grew weaker, he flailed once more at nothing, and lay still.

Illya released the wire. The man groaned. Illya pressed a spot on the man's neck and the man lay still, unconscious. Illya found the keys on the unconscious man and crossed the silent room to the second door. He opened this door cautiously and found himself in another corridor. He moved down this corridor.

The cave turned out to be not a single unit but a honeycomb of passages and small rooms and larger rooms down side tunnels, where Illya heard activity. A vast maze of caves like the caves of Guam and Okinawa during the Second War, where an army could hide and vanish like wraiths in the wind.

Now the maze came to Illya's aid. By using his ears he was able to move unseen, hiding whenever any of the black-uniformed men approached, their footfalls clear on the stone floor. But the real aid was the narrowness of the tunnels. Through the dark and narrow passages the air moved strongly in a venturi effect, and, by feeling the direction of the air, the blond agent moved steadily toward the exit from the complex of caves.

He saw a faint silver light ahead, a round area of silver darkness, before he was discovered.

He saw the exit and passed a wide side gallery at the same instant. In the gallery men worked. A shout went up. Illya darted a quick glance at the gallery and saw the men in black running toward him. He knew that there would be guards at the entrance. His quick mind saw that he could reach the exit before he was caught, but there would be the guards.

He was dressed all in black.

He took out the tiny marble-sized object and hurled it at the advancing men from the side gallery. There was a flash of flame, a loud explosion, and thick white smoke blocked the men from the gallery. The cloud of white smoke spread with incredible speed. Illya ran shouting toward the exit.

“Attack! Attack! They’ve broken through! Everyone to the rear!” Illya shouted in perfect Zambalan-English.

His running black figure, the smoke and flame behind him, gave the three guards on the exit no chance to think. They left their position and came running toward him. Illya stopped, urged them on to the rear. They ran passed him, their weapons ready, their eyes on the thick cloud of smoke.

With a grin, Illya watched them run to the rear, turned, and ran on to the exit. He reached the exit and went out into a moonlit night before he heard the shouts behind him that told him his trick had been discovered.

Outside, he turned once to look back, his eyes narrowed to remember where he was. The cave entrance was camouflaged cleverly, impossible to see from the air or the ground unless you knew it was there.

Directly above the hidden entrance was the tall peak of a mountain. A peak with a little white scar. Illya lined the scar up with a black boulder lower down on the mountain—and he had his line for the cave entrance. Men now came pouring from the camouflaged entrance.

Illya Kuryakin turned and ran off into the jungle.

*

Solo watched the small detector attached to his dashboard with one eye as he drove on into the mountains of Zambala. His other eye alternately watched the road and the truck still behind him. He could lose the truck, but he was more interested in knowing who was in it.

He was almost sure that whoever was driving the truck, and the masked woman, and the men who had attacked him on the hill behind the prison, all belonged to the same group.

But what group?

He wanted to find out, but the first order of business was to locate Illya and free him from whatever was holding him.

Suddenly Solo jammed on his brakes. The detector showed that the trail made a sharp left turn. Solo peered out his window. To the left, perhaps five miles off, he saw a tall mountain with a long white scar just below the summit. A narrow track led off toward the mountain.

Quickly checking the truck behind him—it was closer now—Solo turned his car and plunged into the narrow track. The going was hard; the car bounced from ruts and deep holes in the narrow track. But there were tire marks in his headlights; some vehicle had come this way. Where another vehicle could go, Solo could go!

Behind him he heard a squeal of brakes and the grinding of gears as the truck tried to follow him. He did not think the truck could move as fast on this narrow road, but he hoped that they kept coming. He turned his attention back to negotiating the murderous road. Then he jammed on his brakes again.

He listened to the moonlit night.

Far ahead there were shouts and the distant sound of men running through the jungle.

Solo jumped out of his car and began to run along the track, his U.N.C.L.E. Special set for automatic and fitted, as he ran, with its stock and hand grip. He listened to the sounds ahead and behind. The truck was battling the road but coming closer slowly. The men ahead were rapidly closing in.

A twig broke in the jungle to Solo’s right.

He heard the click of a stone.

Crouching low, Solo circled through the jungle toward the sounds. Ahead, in the gloom of the moonlit night in the jungle, he saw a sudden movement. Solo hit the dirt and crawled ahead toward where he had seen the movement. In front of him a bush moved. He crawled closer. A face emerged from the bush directly in front of him, not more than inches away.

“Well, Napoleon,” Illya said, “you took your time getting here.”

Solo sighed. “You’ll never learn to wait, will you? If you don’t stop rescuing yourself, I may give up my rescues.”

“I can’t depend on you, Napoleon. You’re so slow.”

“But steady,” Solo said. “I mean, I’m here.”

“Yes,” Illya said, “and why are we lying on our faces?”

“I heard you,” Solo said.

“And I heard you,” Illya said.

“Perhaps we could stand up now,” Solo said.

“I had the same thought,” Illya said.

The two agents stood up. Solo passed Illya his small spare automatic. Toward the mountains the sound of pursuit was closer. Toward the road the sound of the truck echoed in the night. Illya looked at Solo.

“You brought some company,” Illya said.

“That I did,” Solo said. “I presume they will now join your friends.”

“It is a distinct possibility,” Illya said. “I’d prefer not to be sandwiched in the middle.”

“Wait!” Solo said.

The two agents listened in the moonlit night. The sound of the truck had changed. There was a sharp grinding of gears and the truck sounds began to move away. The two agents listened until they were certain. The truck was going away.

“Your friends do not seem to be friends with my friends,” Illya said.

“It would appear that way,” Solo said.

“Then I suggest we give that some thought while we make our escape,” Illya said.

“Good thinking,” Solo said. “Now?”

Illya listened to the sounds of pursuit coming much closer.

“Now,” Illya said.

The two agents ran through the jungle and emerged on the rutted narrow track beside Solo’s car. It was the work of seconds to turn the car and drive as fast as the narrow track allowed toward the main road.

There were distant shots in the night as they reached the main road and roared away, leaving the black-uniformed pursuers shooting at shadows.

# THREE

Before they reached San Pablo again, Illya had told his story, Solo had reported what had happened to him.

“I think Mr. Smith was the beggar I followed,” Illya said.

“The man with the thin beard has to be Max Steng himself,” Solo said.

“Then my captors were the Stengali,” Illya said, “and they appeared to be mystified by the events at The Morgan House.”

“Which could be a smoke screen,” Solo said. “Or Tavvi could have been working on his own. Or Tavvi could have been working with someone else without Max Steng’s knowledge.”

“Check,” Illya said. “But who are your friends? Who is the woman who probably killed Tembo? They dress almost exactly like the Stengali, but they did not seem anxious to meet the Stengali.”

“Suppose we find some food and some beds. Tomorrow I see what I can do about that woman,” Solo said.

“While I have a session with O’Hara,” Illya said. “He may know something about the woman and her companions.”

In San Pablo the two agents went straight to the hotel room O’Hara had arranged for them. For once they slept undisturbed.

By nine o’clock the next morning Solo and Illya were in the hidden calm of the miniature U.N.C.L.E. headquarters behind the bookcase in the mansion on the hill that overlooked San Pablo.

O’Hara listened to their reports. The local Section II man agreed that Illya had been captured by the Stengali. He could not guess who the pursuers of Solo were.

“Unless it is some men imported by Zamyatta,” O’Hara said, “which is a possibility. There have been reports of bands of unidentified men in the hills. All across the island, in fact. There have been other killings. Mura Khan and the attempt on Premier Roy were only the latest. Premier Roy has made some documents available to the Tribunal that seem to implicate Zamyatta with the Stengali.

“But Chairman Ramirez wants to move carefully. Zamyatta has many followers. We must be sure or the country could explode, and you know what that would mean down here. The Dominican Republic affair is bad enough, but here—”

“What about this woman, Jezzi Mahal?” Solo said. “And what is The Silver Dunes?”

O’Hara frowned. “You’re sure of that name?”

“I’m quite sure,” Solo said. “Why?”

O’Hara sighed. “Jezzi Mahal is a wealthy and very high and mighty young lady. Jet-set, social, and her father was my father’s only rival as the richest businessman in Zambala. She has been seen often with certain important army officers.”

“And The Silver Dunes?”

“Her beach cabana. She spends the summer there. She would be there now. It is a few miles out of San Pablo, on the south coast. What we Zambalans call our Riviera.”

“Which army officers?” Illya asked.

“Primarily Colonel Julio Brown, who just happens to command the second motorized regiment,” O’Hara said. “Our only fully-trained and crack regiment. The first regiment is largely made up of ceremonial units based in San Pablo. The third, fourth, and fifth are all garrisoned at various parts of the island, and are rarely in full training. The second motorized regiment is stationed ten miles from San Pablo, is always in full training.”

There was a silence in the sound-proof, hidden room in the heart of O’Hara’s mansion. Illya broke the silence.

“In short, if anyone wanted to take over Zambala, it would be good to have Colonel Julio Brown on his side,” Illya said.

“I’m afraid that is it,” O’Hara said.

Solo nodded thoughtfully. “Well then, I think I had better have a talk with Miss Jezzi Mahal.”

“And I will do a little reading on the background of Colonel Julio Brown, Max Steng and Jemi Zamyatta,” Illya said.

“Have fun,” Solo said.

The handsome, boyish agent raised an eyebrow and walked from the room. In the corridor, he took time to look into the other rooms in search of the fine female voice he had talked to over his radio. He found her at her communications desk.

Her stare was withering as he smiled at her.

Solo departed.

The Silver Dunes was a cabana in name only. A vast, low, ranch house on a small cliff at the edge of the dazzlingly blue sea, it spread far and wide and must have contained at least twenty rooms. There was movement in the two rooms that faced the wide open terrace and the sea.

On the beach below the small cliff people lay on the sand in the afternoon sun, and swam in bursts of white in the blue sea.

Solo parked his car on the edge of the highway above the house and out of sight from the house. There was a wide gravel drive down and around from the coast highway to the house below on its low cliff. Solo decided on the short route down the sandy hills. He slid and skidded swiftly but silently down, and approached the house itself from a deep gully in the sandy earth.

At the corner of the house Solo paused. His keen eyes were puzzled. There was no sound from inside the house. He could see directly into one of the two rooms that faced the terrace. The room was empty. Solo moved closer. But again, he paused before he reached the house.

Something else was odd, wrong.

Then he knew what it was. There was no sound at all.

There were no voices from the beach below. This close he should have heard something down there, where the people plunged in the surf. He turned quickly and walked to the edge of the cliff in front of the house.

The beach below was empty.

Solo turned and looked back at the silent house. There had been someone in the house when he looked down from the road. He had watched the house the whole way down and no one had left. But there was no movement in the house now and no one on the beach. Had he been seen?

It looked very much that way, but the U.N.C.L.E. agent had to investigate more closely. He recrossed the terrace to the house itself. Using a small picklock, he unlocked the French doors and went in. He stood for a time in the large living room and listened. Then he moved on into the house and came to a small study. A picture of a man in a colonel's uniform stood on the desk.

Solo began to search the room. In a bottom drawer of the desk he found a secret compartment. In the compartment there was an envelope. In the envelope there was a series of dates and the signature: Z. Napoleon Solo stared at the list and the scrawled Z. One of the dates was the day the Security Chief Mura Khan had been killed, and the premier had shot the Stengali!

The light step came from the living room.

Solo quickly replaced the list in the compartment and closed the drawer. He glided into the corner of the room behind the door. The woman stepped into the study.

She was a beautiful woman, dark and exotic. She wore a deep red dress that left none of her curves hidden. Her hair was long and she wore earrings to her shoulders. But she could have been the masked woman in black who had killed Tembo.

She turned and stared straight at Solo. The agent grinned.

"Miss Mahal, I presume?" Solo said.

The woman showed no expression. "Who are you? What do you want here?"

"Who I am isn't important," Solo said. "What I want here is to return your matches."

He held out the matchbook. The beautiful woman looked at the matchbook. She stepped to Solo, took the matchbook, and dropped it onto

the desk. Her green eyes stared at Solo.

“I don’t recall giving you any matches.”

“No,” Solo said. “You forgot them. I hate to see a lady without her matches.”

“Forgot them?”

“When you called on Inspector Tembo.”

Solo watched for any sign of surprise, or any other sign. Jezzi Mahal showed nothing. The beautiful woman was either very innocent or very controlled.

“Inspector Tembo? I’m afraid I don’t know the inspector very well. I certainly haven’t seen him in months. And now, will you leave, or must I call for help?”

“You wouldn’t really?” Solo said. “After all, I returned your matches. They could have been awkward.”

“Awkward?” the woman said. “Because Tembo was murdered? Really, whoever you are, do you know how many of those matchbooks I have? How many people take them from my house?”

“How did you know Tembo was dead?”

Jezzi Mahal laughed. “I have many friends. The inspector’s murder happened last night. Zambala is a small country. Now, must I become obnoxious?”

“I’ll bet you could,” Solo said.

“I could and will.”

“I’ll bet you’d even get me in trouble with Zamyatta,” Solo said.

For the first time the woman showed a reaction. Almost imperceptibly her eyes glanced toward her desk, toward the drawer with the hidden compartment. She recovered so quickly Solo could almost have believed he had not startled her into the glance. But he had seen the faint motion.

“Mr. Zamyatta and I are not exactly friends,” Jezzi Mahal said.

Solo raised a surprised eyebrow. ‘No? How stupid of me. I meant Colonel Brown. The man in the picture there.”

“The colonel is not a man to have for an enemy, whoever you may be,” Jezzi Mahal said. “If you wish him for an enemy, it can be arranged.”

“I’ll bet it could,” Solo said. “I better leave, hadn’t I?”

“I strongly suspect it.”

Solo grinned again and left the woman in the study. He walked easily across the living room, opened the doors—and closed them again. He jumped back into the cover of a large chair and crouched low. Unseen, he saw the woman come to the study door, look, and immediately go back. He heard her lift the receiver of the telephone.

Solo moved quickly to the doors again, opened them silently this time, and went out. He ran across the terrace and into the gully in the sand hills. He climbed up the hills to his car as fast as he could.

At the edge of the highway he looked carefully in all directions. People were on the beach again—men who carried weapons. Other men moved at a run through the sand hills below.

Solo grinned and ran for his car. He jumped in and started the engine. A long, black car appeared up the highway from the direction of San Pablo. It was coming fast. Solo threw his car into gear and drove off away from San Pablo.

The black car did not stop at The Silver Dunes. It came on at a fast pace.

Ahead there was a curve. Solo went around the curve and swerved off the road into a side road the instant the black car was hidden behind him. Moments later a jeep came around the bend from the opposite direction. The jeep and the black car raced together, passed, and both screeched to a halt. The two cars backed toward each other.

The man in uniform in the jeep looked up at the hills and at the side road. Two men jumped from the black car. The three men all looked at the side road.

Solo got out of his car, where he had parked it out of sight from the highway, but from where he could watch the road. He checked his U.N.C.L.E. Special and plunged silently into the bushes. He worked his way down the hillside.

On the highway the three men drew guns and started up the side road. They moved swiftly but warily. Hidden, Solo let them pass, and then worked the rest of the way down to the highway.

The man left in the black car neither saw nor heard Solo creep up on him. Not until the agent was almost on top of him. Then the man heard, turned, raised an ugly-looking Luger. Solo shot him in the neck with a sleep dart from his Special. The man collapsed.

Up on the side road there were loud voices. They had found his empty car. Solo leaped into the jeep. The keys were still in it. The three men were still running down the side road when he drove away in the jeep.

Solo raced back along the highway toward San Pablo. As he approached the gravel drive down to the beach house of Jezzi Mahal, he saw the men all across the road. Armed men. Solo bent low and pretended to slow the jeep. The men opened a path. Solo jammed down on the gas and the jeep leaped forward, through, and past the men.

He drove on, crouched low, but no shots came. He raised up and looked back. The black car was coming. Napoleon Solo grinned; they would not catch him now.

But someone was worried about what he might have found at The Silver Dunes.

# FOUR

The International Tribunal held the special session in the San Pablo presidential palace, the former palace of the governor general. All members were there. Martin O'Hara held the floor.

"I am sorry to have to tell you, gentlemen, but I have definite indications that Opposition Leader Zamyatta, the Stengali, and Colonel Julio Brown of the second regiment appear to be involved in some form of plot!"

There was a hubbub in the ornate room that had once held the glitter of colonial pomp. The two Western members, and the Zambalan labor leader, Mark Boya, nodded their agreement with O'Hara. The Pole and the Indian demanded to know what kind of indications O'Hara had, demanded that he produce his evidence.

Carlos Ramirez listened for a time, and then banged for order. The room fell silent.

"If this is true, we must act. If it is true. I will call in the Organization of American States. But I agree that we must know what proof we have."

The tall old man glared like a lion around the table in the elegant room. His thick shock of white hair seemed to dominate them all. His strong, alert eyes flashed from face to face in the silent room. He pounded his cane harshly against the floor.

"I repeat, gentlemen, we must have proof!" Ramirez said in a voice that had lost none of its power. "I have perhaps more than anyone to lose in this island if Zamyatta should come to power in a coup, but I will not let my personal business blind me to justice and the will of the people."

The old poet and patriot glared around him. Then he faced O'Hara.

"What exactly is your information, O'Hara?"

O'Hara hesitated. All the proof he had was the possible murder of Tembo by the Mahal woman, the list in her desk that he could not produce, and the experiences of Illya and Solo.

"Very well," and O'Hara told them what he had learned, but without telling them of U.N.C.L.E. He made it sound as if some chance information had come to friends of his.

There was another silence. Ramirez frowned, his craggy old grandee's face set in lines of thought. The Pole and the Indian member sneered.

"None of that can be called proof," the Pole said.

"We have had many rumors since we came here," the Indian pointed out mildly.

"I say it's enough," Mark Boya, the labor leader said.

"We do have a national crisis to consider," one of the two Western members said.

Ramirez listened, and then the old man spoke. “No, we do not have enough proof to charge Zamyatta and Colonel Brown. What O’Hara tells us is enough to convince me, perhaps, but we must be sure. The future of Zambala is at stake. I suggest that we alert the premier and the deputy premier, and that they quietly prepare all the military units they know to be loyal.

“I suggest we be ready, that we make quiet preparations to protect San Pablo. The deputy premier will know what to do. But we must make no move, no public announcement until we have more proof to show the world.”

The members of the tribunal looked at each other. There was a general nodding of heads, all but the Polish member, who frowned. Ramirez smiled.

“Good,” Ramirez said. “By tomorrow, I hope we will know more. The future of much more than Zambala is at stake.”

In a small room at the other end of the presidential palace, Illya and Solo sat at a table and leaned over a small radio receiver. O’Hara had his set open, and the two agents had listened to the entire discussion. Now Illya looked up.

“He is a hard man to convince, Napoleon.”

“He is that,” Solo said.

“Still, he may be right. We don’t really know yet what they plan to do,” Illya said.

“Then I suggest we find out,” Solo said.

“My thought exactly,” Illya said.

“The second regiment?” Solo asked.

“That seems the most likely place. It is very hard to hide the movements of a regiment,” Illya agreed.

“Shall we go?”

The two agents left the small room and went down the wide corridors of the palace. They left the building by a secret entrance known only to O’Hara—a special precaution of the U.N.C.L.E. team in San Pablo.

They emerged through the thick bushes around the palace on its wide, park-like grounds. On another hill above the city, the two agents could see

the night lights of San Pablo below.

They moved quickly to Solo's stolen jeep, drove down the wide ceremonial Mall that led from the palace to the highway into San Pablo.

They reached a point where the highway into the city curved high and close to the sea. The sea itself was far below, the lights of the city directly ahead. A low wall separated the road from the rocks high above the sea, and on the far side of the jagged rocks there was a sheer drop.

It was at this spot that the shots rang out.

Solo felt the jeep go. It bucked and slewed across the highway, both front tires shot out. Solo fought to hold control. The jeep hurtled down the road, careening from side to side of the road. Twice they bounced off the low wall without going over.

At last Solo brought the jeep to a stop against the wall above the sea. The two agents did not pause to feel lucky or to catch their breath. They were out of the jeep, over the parapet, and crouching behind the parapet on the rocks above the sheer drop before the jeep had stopped vibrating from the impact.

Across the highway, from among the trees on the vast grounds of the presidential palace, men moved down to the highway. A dozen men in uniform. It was a uniform the two agents had not seen until now, a regular army uniform. British-made khaki shorts, high socks and heavy black boots, khaki shirts and light brown berets.

The men coming after the two agents were regular soldiers!

"What do you think?" Illya said.

Solo looked over the wall. "I'd have a guess that that patch on their shoulders belongs to the second motorized regiment."

"My thought exactly," Illya said. "The Mahal girl?"

"It has that feeling," Solo said.

"Or someone on the tribunal," Illya said.

"Don't even say it," Solo said.

"I'll say something more to the point."

"And that would be?"

“How do we get out of here?” Illya said.

Solo looked at the soldiers, who had reached the highway now, then down at the sea breaking angry on the rocks far below. Then he looked to the right, where the wall and the cliff joined a few yards away and left nothing but open space for birds all the way down. Then he looked left—to the left there was enough room to walk, and ledges of rocks leading down. It was a way for goats, but it was the only way.

“Left,” Solo said, “and fast.”

Crouched below the wall, the two agents moved as fast as they could to the left. They peered over the wall in the night to see where the soldiers were. The soldiers had reached the jeep and found it empty. Now the soldiers came running down the road. Illya opened fire. The soldiers went to ground and began to fire back. The fire was high over the agents’ heads.

Solo led the way along the narrow cliff, then down to the first ledge. But the going was too slow.

“I’ll have to hold them,” Illya cried. “You go on!”

Illya leaped back up to the wall. Resting his Special on the parapet, he opened fire. Solo continued on down, ledge to ledge, as fast as he could, but it was very slowly. Above, Illya continued his covering fire until the soldiers, well-trained and skilled, worked around and had him covered from two sides.

Halfway down the cliff Solo looked up and saw Illya stand with his hands up. The soldiers swarmed around Illya. But they did not give up with the capture of one man. Leaning over the parapet they opened fire on Solo, called on him to surrender. Their shots were still too high, but Solo was pinned against the cliff ledge. He looked down.

Below, the water seemed deep. He could see no rocks. At the next fusillade Solo cried out, clutched his chest, and let himself fall over the edge of the ledge down into the sea.

Above, the soldiers turned away with their prisoner.

The night became silent.

Below in the water nothing moved.

# ACT III: COUP, COUP, WHO'S GOT THE COUP?

## ONE

THE sea outside the harbor of San Pablo is an angry one. It breaks against the cliffs and deserted beaches that curve out toward the sea itself until the beaches reach the opening into the harbor.

Inside the fine harbor the water is calm and sheltered, and anyone who swims does so on the harbor side. On the sea side, below the cliffs and on the beaches there is nothing but the surf and the flotsam of the sea.

This night, on one of the empty beaches below the cliff road, among the driftwood and seaweed, something rose from the white water, staggered, and fell again. The figure struggled up, falling and rising, until it lay beyond the reach of the surf on the silent beach. The figure was Napoleon Solo, bruised and half drowned.

After a time, Solo raised his head and looked around. The beach was as deserted as it had seemed. Nothing at all moved in the night. From time to time a car passed high on the road above the beach and the cliffs. Solo stood up. He checked his arms and legs, but there were only bruises. Nothing was broken by the rocks.

It was time to go to work.

Aware that when a coup threatened you could not afford to trust anyone, Solo walked the miles from the beach to the mansion of O’Hara above the city. He his whenever a car passed. It was close to morning by the time he staggered into the mansion, and, behind the bookcase in the silent rooms of U.N.C.L.E. in Zambala, told the story to O’Hara.

“What do you want to do?” O’hara asked.

“Go after Illya. Do you know what the insignia of the second regiment looks like?”

O’Hara went to a filing cabinet and took out a folder. He showed Solo a picture. It was the insignia worn by the soldiers who had attacked on the cliff road. Solo nodded.

“Right, then I’m going to their camp. Are they in their regular camp?”

“At Tidworth Barracks, ten miles northeast on the Real Plain,” O’Hara said. “You want help?”

“No, we can’t tip U.N.C.L.E.‘s hand yet, and your men might be known,” Solo said. “I’ll just need a car.”

“Take the small Triumph. It’s equipped. Smoke, extra guns, bombs in the usual places, super-charged for extra speed.”

“Right,” Solo said.

Ten minutes later the powerful little Triumph was on the road into the mountains again. Napoleon Solo drove swiftly with the sun up and bright over the tall blue mountains. The small car ate up the ten miles. A sign on the side of the road told Solo that Tidworth was one mile ahead. He drove more carefully.

His sharp eyes began to notice things. There were troops in the fields on both sides of the road—troops and vehicles in full battle dress. On the sides of the mountains there were flashes that showed high observation posts. Small planes flew over from time to time as if reconnoitering the area.

These were not the normal activities of a regiment in barracks.

Solo continued to drive. Ahead he saw a roadblock. He eased the Triumph up to the wire. Four soldiers watched him. A sergeant stepped up to check his papers. Solo handed him the specially-prepared papers that identified him as George Solo, uniform salesman from New York.

“And why are you here, sir?” the sergeant asked.

“To sell uniforms, naturally,” Solo said with a smile.

“Really? The colonel made no mention of a uniform salesman visiting the barracks today.”

“Ah, yes. Well the colonel doesn’t know. I, ah, just decided to visit Zambala’s best regiment to see if I could find a few, shall we say, flaws in the present uniforms.”

“On your own, sir?”

“Ah, yes, all my own little idea,” Solo said with a dazzling smile. “Of course, the premier knows I’m here.”

“I see, sir. Very good. Then I’m sure the colonel will welcome you.”

Solo eased the Triumph into reverse. “Well, as a matter of fact I can see that you’re busy, so I think I’ll just come back some other time.”

The sergeant nodded to his men. They stood around the Triumph with their rifles pointed very accurately at Solo’s chest.

The sergeant nodded again, this time to Solo.

“I know you want to see the colonel. Such a long trip, you don’t want to leave empty-handed, I’m sure.”

Solo looked at the rifles and got out of the car.

*

Illya lay on the floor of the room. He was not tied, and the room had a window. Looking out, he could see the grounds of the complex of buildings, and the soldiers walking across the grounds. But the window was barred, and three stories up with no holds to the ground.

Where he lay he considered what had happened. After his capture there had been the trip in the truck guarded by the soldiers. The arrival at what was obviously a barracks station of some regiment, and his delivery to an officer, who promptly locked him in this room. Papers had been handed to the officer. The officer had treated him well, but refused t listen to him.

Ever since then he had been fed regularly. He was not bound or chained, no one had bothered him or questioned him. He was simply being held in what was clearly a guardroom just like any military prisoner.

Illya Kuryakin was puzzled.

The soldiers who had attacked Solo and himself had shot at them, literally kidnapped him. Yet when they arrived with him here at the barracks they had handed him over with papers as if he were a prisoner being transferred. They kidnapped him by force, yet treated him more like a prisoner of war.

They had not eve searched him or taken away his watch, belt, rings, shoes or clothes. They had fed him well; he had seen no one but the soldier who brought his food since he had arrived. No one kept him from looking out the window—and from the window he could clearly see the preparations.

Preparations for a regimental move of some kind. The signs were obvious.

He went again to the barred window. The signs were still there—kits being inspected, soldiers cleaning weapons on the quadrangle, vehicles being checked and gassed across the quadrangle in the motor pool, boxes of ammunition and large shells for the tanks opened and stacked ready to be issued.

Until now Illya had made no attempt to escape because he wanted to see why they had captured him. But nothing had happened, and the regiment was moving close to readiness. Soon he would have to make a move.

He was thinking this when he saw Napoleon Solo.

The blond agent came alert. He watched as the soldiers marched Solo across the quadrangle toward the same building Illya was in. There was no doubt that Solo was under guard. The same polite guard as Illya had had himself. Illya turned away from the window.

He crossed the room, checked the door. There was a soldier stationed directly outside! Frowning, Illya recrossed to the window. He could easily melt the bars, and lower himself on the hair-thin spool of wire hidden in the third button of his jacket. But there were soldiers all over the quadrangle; this part of the building was in clear view of hundreds of them.

Illya rubbed his hand through his shock of blond hair and began to study the walls of the room. The barracks were built of fieldstone, but the interior walls were normal lath and plaster. What was on the other side of

the one wall that did not face the hall? He could break through, only to find himself in another cell!

No, this was a matter for trickery. The guard outside probably had orders to never enter a cell himself, but to call the corporal of the guard in any emergency. If he feigned sickness, even death, the guard would probably simply call for the corporal, unless he could panic the fellow, which would not be easy. This was a crack unit, its men would be trained and veterans.

Somehow, he had to panic the guard and silence him before he could summon the corporal.

He looked around the room again and he saw the wash basin. Illya began to smile. A standard wash basin with hot and cold faucets and a stopper. The sink was very close to the door. Illya smiled more. There was something a lot better than panic—curiosity and uncertainty!

The fear of looking foolish!

There was a weapon! Illya studied the room and the door. The door opened inward, with the wash basin on the side of the room hidden by the door. The guard would come in, slowly, not running, and look carefully around the door. Illya would have no more than a second or two, and he could not allow the guard to make a sound.

Illya took off his wristwatch, opened the back, and took out the small capsule—a tiny plastic capsule wrapped in some kind of netting.

Then he went to the sink, put the stopper in the bowl, and started both faucets running, but not too fast, just filling the bowl without making a great deal of noise. He stood at the sink until the water began to run over and flow down to the floor and across the floor toward the door.

Then he stood just behind the door, the capsule ready, and waited.

He watched the small stream of water flow inexorably to the door, under it. He waited. Another minute passed, two minutes…three. The water flowed thin under the door. Four minutes. The water flowed slowly, a thin and wide stream going out under the door.

Then Illya heard the guard move. He heard the low, muttered exclamation. Behind the door the small blond grinned. He could picture the

soldier standing outside the door, staring at the stream of water. He could imagine the soldier looking around as if to ask what to do.

The soldier would look again at the water. Illya Kuryakin heard steps as the guard came to the door and listened. Now the guard stepped back. Curiosity and uncertainty was gripping him. What should he do about this? Call the corporal? For a water leak? Have the corporal come running with two more men—to find a puddle of water?

The guard moved to the door. “You in there! What’s that water?”

Illya remained silent. He heard the guard shift his feet. Then there was the sound of the key in the lock. Illya grinned. As he had expected, the guard was not going to call for the corporal for a water leak. The door opened slowly.

Illya moved with it, silently.

The door opened all the way and the guard peered around and saw the sink. The guard blinked, turned his head to look for Illya. In that split second Illya thrust the capsule in the face of the guard and squeezed.

A jet of gas spat into the face of the guard. He took a half step backward and collapsed without a sound.

Illya caught the guard and his rifle, lowered them to the floor, jumped and closed the door, and ran to turn off the water. He stripped the guard and dressed in the guard’s clothes. He took the guard’s rifle and keys. He stepped to the door, opened it, stepped out, closed and locked the door behind him.

He was free in the corridor, in disguise, and the guard would be out for at least two hours—all done in a matter of a minute and twenty seconds. There was no one else in sight, and Illya began to walk carefully along the third floor corridor. He was in search of Colonel Julio Brown.

## TWO

His face hidden, Illya Kuryakin moved along the corridors and down the stairs until he located the office of Colonel Julio Brown. The office had

two guards stationed outside it. Illya turned away, and climbed back to the second floor and the room directly above the office of the colonel.

The room was empty now. Illya went to the window and looked out. He was in luck. The wall of the next building came close to the main building at this point. The space between was hidden from any observation. Directly below the window of the room there was another window, the colonel's office.

Illya took out his spool of hair-thin wire, made a loop at the bottom for his hands, a loop five and a half feet from the end for his feet, attached the wire to a pipe in the room, and lowered himself out the window head first until his eyes were at a level with the top of the window below.

Inside the office there were two men. Illya, hanging head down in the narrow space between the buildings, recognized one man by his description from O'Hara's briefing and by his colonel's uniform. The other man had his back turned. He was a short man, but heavy, almost as broad as he was tall. A man with the back and shoulders of a bull.

This second man, who was dressed in civilian clothes, seemed to be arguing with Colonel Brown. Then the colonel began to talk, emphasizing his points by tapping a short trenchknife on his desk. The short, bull-like man turned away from the colonel and faced the window. Illya saw the two long scars on his dark face. He recognized Jemi Zamyatta!

The leader of Zambala's opposition turned back to Colonel Brown, spread his arms, walked close to the colonel. Zamyatta seemed to smile as he talked. The colonel listened, began to nod in slow agreement. Zamyatta put his bear-like arm around the shoulders of the colonel. Both men began to laugh.

Illya watched, and saw both men look at the door. The colonel spoke and a soldier came in and saluted. The soldier, a sergeant, made some report. The colonel nodded. The soldier left. The colonel spoke again to Zamyatta, and the bull-like man nodded and walked to a second door. Zamyatta left the room.

The colonel spoke again. His other door opened and the sergeant came back -with Napoleon Solo!

Hanging in the narrow space, Illya watched the colonel offer Solo a cigarette. Then the colonel began to ask questions. Illya could not hear, but from the movement of the colonel's mouth the questions were sharp and not friendly. Illya hauled himself up to the second floor and climbed back into the room above the colonel's office.

He untied the wire, looped it around the pipe, took his hand-hold this time at the end of the now double strand of wire, took the rifle in his other hand, and lowered himself again out the window. He lowered feet first until he stood against the wall just above the window. Then he kicked off with his feet, swung out in the narrow space, and swung back through the window.

He crashed into the office in a shower of glass, straightened in the air form his crouch, and landed on his feet with his rifle covering the colonel. Solo jumped behind the outer door.

The door burst open and two guards came running in. Solo leaped on them from behind and dropped both with sharp blows to the neck. He bent and scooped up their weapons.

"The window!" Solo cried.

Illya Kuryakin squeezed his tiny capsule under the nose of the colonel. The colonel slumped to the floor.

Illya whirled and followed Solo to the window. The two agents climbed through and out into the narrow space between the buildings. They ran between the buildings in the direction away from the quadrangle. They reached where the buildings ended. Ahead was a wide parade ground and then a fence; beyond it the trees of the jungle rose up on the side of a mountain.

"We have to reach the fence," Illya said.

"They're busy enough," Solo said, and pointed to the left out on the open parade ground. Two platoons of soldiers had their kit spread out on the ground. The men were preparing to move.

"Too busy," Illya said, and told Solo about Zamyatta and all the preparations he had seen.

“Yes, I noticed,” Solo said. “They’ve got the area sealed. They’re all ready for something. Brown wanted very much to know how come the premier had given me permission to come up here. He didn’t act like he believed me, but he was very interested.”

“He probably thinks we’re working for Premier Roy,” Illya said. “They treated me very well, but wanted me out of the way.”

Solo peered out. The soldiers were in no hurry to leave the field. Solo handed his rifle to Illya.

“Walk me out as if I were a visiting fireman with an escort,” Solo said. “Maybe they won’t notice.”

“It’s as good a way as any,” Illya said. “If they raise the hue and cry, sprint for the fence.”

Solo stepped out and began to walk nonchalantly across the open parade ground. Illya walked a pace behind him as if either escorting or guarding. Solo looked around with great interest as if he was inspecting. They reached the middle of the field without attracting any notice.

A few soldiers looked up, but, like all soldiers preparing for some move, they had little interest in a civilian being escorted on some inspection by one of their men.

In this fashion, Illya and Solo nearly reached the fence. Then two things happened. There was a shout and men running from the direction of the headquarters building. And a sergeant with the men preparing their gear turned at the shout and saw Solo. It was the sergeant who had picked him up at the road block.

“Run!” Illya cried.

Abandoning all pretense, the two agents sprinted for the fence that was close now. The sergeant shouted at his men. The men dropped what they were doing, picked up their weapons, and came after the two agents.

The other pursuers were farther behind.

“The ones packing won’t have rounds in their guns!” Solo said.

“I hope you’re right!” Illya panted.

Solo was right. The closest pursuers did not have ammunition. Illya and Solo hit the fence in strong leaps, vaulted up and scrambled over. On

the other side they plunged into the jungle, just as the soldiers with ammunition came into range.

Shots whistled through the trees and brush, but none hit, and the two agents ran on through the jungle and up on the side of the mountain.

After a time there was no sound of pursuit from behind. Solo sighed.

“Well, they seem to have given up.”

“I doubt it, Napoleon,” Illya said drily. “Look.”

The small blond Russian pointed up and ahead. High on the mountain the sunlight flashed from something—something that moved up there.

“Binoculars, and trained right on us,” Illya said.

“An observation post,” Solo agreed. “The mountains are full of them.”

“The troops are very alert. It seems obvious why,” Illya said. “There!”

To the left a cloud of dust had risen into a sky above the jungle. On the mountain the flashes from the observation post became regular.

“Vehicles on a dirt road through here,” Solo said.

“And the post is signaling them. About us, no doubt,” Illya said.

The two agents watched the dust moving closer in the sky. Then an observation plane flew low overhead, a face looking down. To the right there was a sudden rumbling in the distance.

Illya Kuryakin and Napoleon Solo began to trot ahead, still going up the mountain toward the observation post.

## THREE

The game of hide and seek went on all the rest of the day. A deadly game of hounds and hares, and Illya and Solo were the hares.

The two agents made their way through the thick jungle and up the side of the mountain. Once they crossed the dirt road just minutes before an armored car came slowly along, its turret aimed into the jungle, the officer in the turret scanning the vegetation on both sides.

Once they lay under thick growth as a squad of soldiers on foot passed within a few yards.

Once they crouched in a shadowed hollow in the mountain, their fingers on their triggers, as another squad that had almost surprised them passed within a few feet.

They eluded their pursuers all the rest of the day, but they were unable to escape. They were pushed steadily south and west, higher into the mountains and farther from San Pablo.

They climbed over the first mountains and down into the valley beyond and up the slopes of the next mountains.

“We’re being herded like cattle, Napoleon,” Illya said. “I don’t like it very much.”

“Yes,” Solo said, gazing up and away to the south and east. “They know what they are doing. I’d say that we are being moved deeper into the wilderness.”

“I hope that is all,” Illya said.

“All?”

“I hope we are not being pushed into some real trap. They know this country and we don’t.”

“All this proves one thing anyway—the colonel surely doesn’t want us to report to the tribunal!” Solo said. “He must have most of the regiment after us.”

“You always look on the bright side,” Illya said. “Which brings me to the conclusion that we had better find a way to get back.”

“Yes, I’d say it was about time we stopped being pushed,” Solo agreed.

Without another word, the two agents turned, checked their weapons, and began to move carefully back toward the ring of troops pursuing them so relentlessly.

It was almost night when they found the opening.

It was a deep and narrow canyon in the space between two mountain peaks high up. They had spotted a light tank on the outer slope of the left mountain, and a squad of foot soldiers on the outer slope of the right mountain. In between there was this narrow canyon, deep and shadowed.

“Shall we try it?” Illya said.

“They can’t cover everywhere,” Solo said. “It’s too steep on both sides. If we run into anyone it couldn’t be many.”

“Let’s go then,” Illya said. “It’s our best bet.”

They plunged cautiously into the narrow canyon.

They were halfway through and still hadn’t seen any of the soldiers. They emerged on the other side, climbed up the sides of the canyon to observe. Illya pointed to the soldiers and vehicles in the fading sunlight—the line of troops was now behind them!

“We’re through,” Illya said.

“Then let’s get moving,” Solo said. “They’ll figure it out sooner or later, then they’ll have to make their move.”

The two agents slid down to the downward slope of the mountain, moved swiftly off down toward the jungle again. At the base of the mountain they reached, and passed through, a continuation of the narrow canyon. The mouth of the canyon opened into the flat land of the jungle that stretched unbroken toward the sea and San Pablo.

It also opened into the trap!

As Illya and Solo came out of the canyon they saw the troops facing them. There were troops up on each side of the small canyon. Troops moved down from the mountain behind them.

For a long minute they stood there. Ahead, behind his troops, they saw the colonel himself. They had been neatly lured into a trap. The two agents glanced at each other and prepared to make one last attempt to escape.

At that instant the firing exploded all around them!

Firing from the jungle, from the mountain, behind the troops!

Illya and Solo dove for cover. They began to open fire with their own puny weapons. But it was enough. Caught between two fires, the troops broke and ran for cover. Four men dressed in ragged black uniforms appeared from nowhere and leaped down the canyon side to Illya and Solo.

“Quick! They will be back!”

Solo and Illya did not stop to argue. They scrambled up the side of the canyon with their rescuers. They all went over the crest and ran down into the jungle. They ran perhaps a quarter of a mile. Behind them there was

firing again as the regiment had regrouped and was coming on again. The ragged rescuers did not even look back, but ran through the jungle with Illya and Solo.

They reached a small clearing. From all sides ragged men in black uniforms were pouring from the jungle into the clearing. Illya faced the leader of the four who had rescued them.

“We can make it alone now. We have to reach San Pablo.”

The ragged man in the black uniform raised his weapon, snapped an order. The ragged men stood all around Illya and Solo with their weapons leveled.

“You go nowhere. You are our prisoners!”

Illya and Solo looked slowly around at all the rescuers who now pointed their weapons.

Hours passed, and it was dark night, when the march ended in a box canyon among the mountains. Illya and Solo, their weapons once again taken from them, marched into the box canyon and saw the two men seated on boulders and waiting for them.

One of the men was Mr. Smith! The other was the small, wiry man with the thin wisp of beard on his chin. This bearded man waved the two agents to seats on other stones. His large, deep eyes stared at them. Illya nodded at the two men with a weary recognition. Solo stared at the small, wiry man with the wisp of beard.

“Steng!” Solo said softly. “Max Steng!”

“You know me, sir,” Steng said. “Yes, I am Max Steng. Now I must know who you are.”

The bearded Stengali leader looked at Illya Kuryakin. “We captured your friend once before, but he escaped us most ingeniously. You two are not local agents. You belong to some larger group. The OAS, perhaps? United States CIA?”

Mr. Smith leaned and whispered to Steng. Steng nodded, his fanatic’s eyes on Illya Kuryakin.

“Mr. Smith suggests there is much more than meets the eye about you two. You, the taller one, are obviously an American. The small, blond one is

not American. Mr. Smith says that he mumbled in Russian when we had him earlier. What organization employs American and Russians together? Perhaps Interpol?"

"No," Mr. Smith said. "That is a police organization. These men are not policemen."

Steng nodded. "True. Who are you and who sent you to Zambala?"

The two agents sat on their boulders and watched the Stengali leaders. All around the Stengali stood and sat in the box canyon in the jungle night. Illya studied the bearded guerilla leader from under his brows.

"Perhaps you will tell us why you killed Mura Khan and tried to kill Premier Roy?" Illya said.

Mr. Smith answered. "We did not kill Mura Khan, or try to kill Roy. We gave no such orders."

"Then what were your men doing there?" Solo said.

Max Steng looked at Solo. "That we would also like to know. We want to know how Tavvi got into that room."

"You don't know?" Illya said quickly.

"We do not. Tavvi was in San Pablo on a routine observation. He vanished. The other man, the one arrested at the scene of Mura Khan's death, was supposed to be with Tavvi. Both men vanished. How or why they were where they were we do not know."

Illya and Solo looked at each other. The two Stengali leaders watched them. At last Napoleon Solo turned to Max Steng.

"It appears that someone was out to start trouble, to make it look like the Stengali were ready to begin a civil war," Solo said.

"Why?" Mr. Smith said.

"Obviously to cover a real coup," Illya said.

Max Steng pulled on his wisp of beard. "You were being pursued by the second regiment. They were in full battle gear."

"They were," Solo said.

"Then it is Colonel Brown," Steng said. "But not alone. The colonel is a soldier, a loyal one. He would not attempt a revolt."

“How about with Jemi Zamyatta?” Illya said softly.

Max Steng shook his head.

“It is probable, yet hard to believe. For years I have tried to convince Zamyatta that Roy was hurting the country, that his deals with the West are not for our benefit. Deals that make a few Zambalans rich and the majority poor. He always refused to join me. He always said he was tired of violence.”

“We saw him with the colonel,” Solo said.

Steng smiled sadly. “What do we do, then? We would not want to stop the ending of Premier Roy. But we would not want to see Zamyatta come to power on a military coup.”

Mr. Smith laughed harshly. “We will oppose them all as we have always done! Until Zambala is truly free!”

Smith’s voice echoed down the box canyon and a sudden silence fell over the Stengali.

It saved their lives.

In that sudden silence the falling boulder was heard. The boulder fell down from the rim of the canyon, bouncing from rock to rock loud in the silent night.

## FOUR

The sound of the falling boulder was like the end of the world. The Stengali all froze. The rock bounced down and down and down. Then there was no more noise.

“Move!” Max Steng shouted.

The Stengali moved. They seemed to vanish like wraiths in the night. Silent, barely making a sound, the whole band of swift guerillas vanished. Solo and Illya followed the two leaders.

In an instant, they were all in among the giant boulders of the box canyon in a move that was obviously so well-trained into the Stengali that it was a reflex action.

From above, on the rim of the canyon, a voice now called down.

“You cannot escape, pigs!”

The Stengali were silent among their rocks.

“We cover both sides, the open end! You are boxed in the canyon. Surrender, dogs!”

On the floor of the canyon no one moved or spoke.

Up on the rim a figure appeared. It shone a light on itself. It was a tall man wearing the uniform of a major. The major stood there with the flashlight in his hand trained on himself.

Nothing happened. Illya and Solo watched upwards. The Stengali could have been a hundred miles away, they were so silent and so unseen from above. The major turned to speak behind him.

“They must have escaped,” the major said.

“I think not,” a voice said from the dark behind him.

“Such pigs always have an escape route. They would not stay to fight with us,” the major said.

“They are down there,” the voice said. “I say we use the grenades.”

“Coward! Grenades for such pigs? Next you will say send for the artillery!”

“If there was artillery, I would say send for the artillery,” the hidden voice said.

“I say they have run like the dogs they are, Lieutenant,” the major said.

The major still stood there with the flashlight on himself. He looked down at the silent and motionless floor of the box canyon. The major took a step closer to the slope down the to canyon floor.

“Shoot, pigs! Look, I stand here! I have a light! Shoot! Even you must see me! Shoot me, you pigs!”

Nothing moved in the night.

“They are gone,” the major said. “No dog of a guerilla could resist shooting at me.”

The major began to walk down the slope, the flashlight still held on his arrogant face. In his other hand he held his pistol. He walked slowly down,

his eyes alert and jumping from shadow to shadow below on the canyon floor, but his face set in a sneer of courage.

“Look! I defy you! Shoot, pigs!”

The major stepped farther down the slope. Behind the major, faint against the night sky, other heads appeared to watch. Down in the canyon, Illya touched Solo on the shoulder. The small blond nodded up toward the slowly descending major.

“Napoleon! I know him. He’s the tall man in black who was watching the prison the night the Stengali was killed trying to escape! The one who tried to ambush me.”

On the slope of the canyon, the tall major continued down. He began to move faster now. His arrogant face broke into a small smile. He had started in bravado, and now it looked like he had been right. The Stengali were gone, and he would make good his display of courage. It would impress his men very much.

“Pig dogs! Where are you? Do you fear one man? Come on, you dogs; shoot if you dare!”

There was neither sound nor movement from the rocks on the canyon floor. The major turned to look up the slope.

Now the hidden lieutenant stood there on the crest.

“You see, they are gone! We would have been up there hiding forever. They cannot have gone far. There must be some way out through the closed end.”

“Perhaps you are right, my major,” the lieutenant said from above.

The major laughed scornfully. “Men do not say perhaps. Come, there is no danger.”

The major turned and walked three more steps down. He was almost on the canyon floor. Illya and Solo sensed movement to their right. Max Steng rested his rifle on a boulder.

“Pigs!” the major shouted.

The single shot echoed up and down the canyon.

The major pitched forward on his face and skidded down to the bottom of the canyon. He neither moved nor spoke again. Max Steng lowered his

rifle.

The second shot killed the wary lieutenant, who had not been as wary as his intelligence had told him to be. The lieutenant rolled halfway down the canyon wall and stuck against a boulder.

“A brave man,” Max Steng said ironically.

A wild fusillade of shots filled the night from all sides of the canyon. Hidden in the night, the soldiers up on the mountain poured fire down into the canyon.

The Stengali did not answer. Hidden behind their rocks they were invulnerable. After a time the firing died down. Someone up above had realized that the fire was doing no good.

Then the troops above started down.

The Stengali waited.

The troops came on; they reached a spot halfway down. Two soldiers paused to make sure the lieutenant was indeed dead.

The Stengali opened fire.

Caught on the slope, the soldiers were no match. Half of them fled back up the hill, leaving bodies all over the slope. The other half dove for cover. There, on the slope, they lay pinned down by the accurate fire of the Stengali.

“Move out,” Max Steng whispered.

The word was whispered down the line of hidden guerillas. Half continued to fire. The other half left their places, and, hidden by the boulders, moved silently away into the dark at the closed end of the canyon. Illya Kuryakin watched admiringly.

“I thought they would have a way out,” the small Russian said. “A good trick, Napoleon.”

“Sit in what looks like a box canyon and keep the enemy from covering one side,” Solo said.

Another half of the Stengali slipped away. On the slopes the pinned-down soldiers were quiet. Up on the crest there was movement as the soldiers regrouped. More Stengali slipped away. Now there were only a few

guerillas left—and Max Steng. Staying with his last men. The small, bearded leader hissed to Illya and Solo.

"Come."

The two agents followed Steng. The last guerillas fired a heavy fire, then turned and slipped back into the dark. Illya and Solo followed Steng through the rocks in the night. They reached the sheer wall at the box end and found a narrow crevice. They went through the crevice into a dark tunnel.

Five minutes later they emerged on the far side on a small slope downward to the jungle. Illya pointed up and to the left. Solo looked and saw the tall mountain with the white scar—they were very close to the Stengali caves.

"Very clever," Solo said.

But the soldiers proved to be clever, too. As Illya and Solo followed Steng down the slope, there was sudden movement on the mountain behind them. Soldiers poured down—they had guessed the only escape route.

Firing broke out all across the mountain and the jungle. Illya and Solo followed Max Steng into the cover of the jungle. They passed a line of Stengali fanned out in skirmish order among the trees and brush to cover the retreat of the others. But ahead there was also firing.

Max Steng moved among his men, giving low orders. The guerillas moved in silence and precision, fighting an open fight and retreating slowly toward the other firing ahead. Mr. Smith was there, calmly directing the fight. The Stengali had fallen into a bad situation, but they were handling it like the veterans they were.

Illya and Solo watched the progress of the running fight. No one was bothering with them now. Clearly, the attacking soldiers were out to destroy the Stengali if they could. Illya and Solo looked at each other. Here was their chance. Silently, the two agents slipped away into the jungle.

They had gone perhaps a hundred yards when they heard the sharp click of a bolt being drawn on an automatic weapon. Ahead, in a clearing, they saw soldiers in uniform pouring through the night toward them. They searched for an escape.

“Here! Quick!” a voice hissed.

A face peered out from the bushes. Illya and Solo did not pause to ask questions. They ran into the bushes and found a deep hole. They jumped down into the hole. Someone pulled a cover over the hole. Moments later there was the sound of voices above. The soldiers were searching for them.

In the hole they squatted with their unseen benefactor. The soldiers above beat the bushes. Then the voices moved away. Solo lighted his small ring flashlight. A dark man they had never seen grinned at them.

“Ah, Mr. Solo and Mr. Kuryakin, a pleasure to meet you!” the man said. “A greater pleasure to be of service. I think we will be safe now.”

Illya narrowed his sharp eyes. “Who might you be?”

“Ah, allow me to introduce myself. I am Ahmed Bengali, a member of the security police. As you can see, I have been working undercover with this regiment.”

“For the premier?” Solo said.

The dark man shook his head. “For Zambala! I am a policeman, not a politician. The premier assigned me to watch Colonel Brown. As you can see, I worked closely.”

The dark man wore the uniform of a captain in the second regiment. He indicated his uniform, and then he looked anxiously at the two agents.

“I imagine you gentlemen learned what I learned.”

“What would that be?” Solo asked.

“That Colonel Brown and Jemi Zamyatta are plotting a coup to take place tomorrow!” Bengali said.

Illya nodded. “We learned the same. But not the time.”

“I have the time, and there is no time to lose bringing our word to the tribunal,” Bengali said.

The dark man listened. The night was totally silent now. The three men emerged from the deep hole and stood in the jungle. Then they turned and ran off into the night.

An hour later they came out on a road where Bengali had a car waiting. They got into the car and drove off fast toward San Pablo and the

presidential palace, where the international tribunal was convened at once.

# ACT IV: WHERE ARE THE REBELS OF YESTERYEAR?

## ONE

THE San Pablo airport is on the southern outskirts of the city, set between the mountains and the sea. It was noon when Illya Kuryakin and Napoleon Solo stood on the runway with Premier Roy beside them.

The tall premier was serious and grateful.

“I want to thank you personally, gentlemen, for clearing up this appalling situation.”

Since dawn the premier had been back in office, the wheels turning to head off the coup. Zamyatta and Colonel Brown were in San Pablo prison. Martial law had been declared, the other regiments brought into San Pablo and the second regiment contained and disarmed in its barracks. A full hunt was on for the Stengali, and the Organization of American States had been alerted to have troops ready to move in case.

“That U.N.C.L.E. was here was a pleasant surprise,” Premier Roy said to the agents. “I will not ask how you learned of our need, but I will be eternally grateful for your so expert aid. Without your testimony, I doubt that I could have convinced the tribunal of the necessity for immediate action against Zamyatta and Colonel Brown.”

Illya frowned. “But the Stengali, Your Excellency. We found no evidence of their complicity. They were being used as dupes.”

“Ah, perhaps. But they are very clever, my friends. Steng is a devious man. I think, perhaps, he fooled you. Bengali has proof that Steng has been dealing with Colonel Brown. Undoubtedly they had a falling out.

“No, they must also be crushed if we are to have peace in Zambala. I have allowed them to exist too long. I blame myself. Max Steng detected weakness, and it gave him hope. He must be taught that there is no room in Zambala for violence.”

Solo was about to speak, when Illya smiled and nodded.

“Of course, you are probably right,” Illya said. “Tell me, that woman, Jezzi Mahal, have you apprehended her?”

“Ah, Brown’s lady,” M.M. Roy said. “No, but we will. I have a search on for her. Rest easy, gentlemen. Your work has been well done. I do not think I will even need OAS troops. Of course, the tribunal will remain in session until I can suspend martial law. I want all my actions open and observed. That is the only true course of democracy. All open, no ugly, deadly secrets.”

“Of course,” Illya said. “I think we can report that all is secure in Zambala.”

“Take my solemn oath for that, gentlemen. And once more my thanks, and the gratitude of my poor country. I believe your plane is ready.”

Solo and Illya saw the stewardess of the plane waving to them. It was time to go. The two agents looked toward Martin O’Hara, who was showing no recognition. They thanked the premier, and walked to their plane.

Solo carried his attache case. But Illya carried a large suitcase the small blond could barely carry. At the plane he turned this suitcase over to the stewardess, and the agents boarded the small, twin-engined plane.

There were few passengers, the plane making two more stops in more popular tourist areas of Jamaica and Antigua. The two agents took their seats and watched out the window. The official group of the tribunal and the premier were still watching the plane. Then the plane taxied down the runway, and took off into the blue sky over San Pablo. It few high over the mountains and the jungle on its route across the island, its propellers glinting in the sun.

“We’re not really leaving, are we?” Solo said in a low voice as he smiled at the pretty stewardess.

“Of course not,” Illya said, beaming at the stewardess. “It is all very wrong.”

“Very,” Solo said, nodding at the stewardess.

The two men talked very low while they smiled and nodded at passengers and the stewardess. They looked like two young men on holiday without a care in the world.

“How did Bengali know who we were? Even our names,” Illya said.

“The premier is very anxious to wipe out the Stengali,” Solo said.

“No one should have known who we were,” Illya said.

“How did Bengali happen to find us so easily?” Solo said.

“We escaped very conveniently,” Illya said, looking out the window at the high central Zambalan mountains below.

“We escaped very conveniently many times. Those soldiers were terrible shots on that cliff road,” Solo said. “That note from Zamyatta was very conveniently left where I could find it. And I got away.”

“But we did see Zamyatta with Colonel Brown,” Illya said.

“The regiment was on the move, and did try to hold us,” Solo said.

“It is confusing,” Illya said, “and I don’t like it. Are you ready?”

“Ready,” Solo said. “In that suitcase, of course?”

“Of course,” Illya said. “Shall we go?”

The two agents stood up and sauntered back toward the baggage room. Inside, they quickly opened Illya’s suitcase. They took out the two parachutes and the two small oxygen masks and cylinders. The cylinders on, the parachutes on, and the masks in place, they opened the cargo hatch.

Moments later the two parachutes floated down in the afternoon sun toward the jungle below as the plane flew on toward the sea.

*

Along the familiar fence, the two agents watched the soldiers in Tidworth Barracks. It was night now, the trip across the island toward San Pablo having taken many hours. There was singing in the barracks, a great

many soldiers wandering across the parade ground and the quadrangle, and no sign of guards anywhere.

“Well, there it is,” Solo said.

“No evidence that the regiment has been affected at all,” Illya said. “We found no units or any other regiment anywhere near here.”

“No roadblocks, no change from ordinary barrack life,” Solo said.

“In short, no one has been arrested except Colonel Brown!” Illya said.

“A loyal man and good soldier,” Solo said.

“I think, Napoleon, we should have a talk with the good colonel.”

“I think we should,” Solo said.

The two agents faded into the night. A few moments later they reached the small, black car they had stolen earlier, and drove off toward San Pablo.

There was no sign in the calm night of the usual effects of martial law. All seemed peaceful in Zambala.

An ominous peace.

The prison was as silent as ever, set into the hill outside San Pablo. Illya and Solo found many more guards this time.

There were two at the door; the two agents shot one each with the sleep darts from their U.N.C.L.E. Specials.

Quickly they changed clothes with the sleeping guards, and dragged the guards into a nearby empty office. Then they went up the stairs and began their search. They found the cells of Colonel Julio Brown and Jemi Zamyatta at the very top of one of the new wings.

“They don’t want any escape this time,” Solo said. “I always thought that Stengali escaped too easily.”

“They don’t want any escape yet. I imagine it might be arranged later,” Illya said.

There were two guards in the jail corridor outside the barred door into the top cellblock. There was another guard inside the cellblock near the actual cells. There were alarm boxes on the wall both inside the cellblock and outside. It would be necessary to silence the three guards quickly.

They shot the two outside guards with sleep darts and ran fast toward the cellblock. The guard inside whirled at the sounds. Illya shot him on the dead run and the guard slumped to the floor inches from the alarm box. Solo bent and took the keys from the fallen guard.

Solo opened the outer barred door and the two agents went down the line of cells. All the cells were empty until they reached the last two. In these last cells Jemi Zamyatta, and Colonel Julio Brown, stood watching the agents.

“Good evening, gentlemen,” Solo said.

Zamyatta watched them, looked at their guns. Colonel Brown looked at their guns, and then at their faces.

“You two! You work for the premier?”

“Never mind who we work for,” Illya said. “The question is what work are we going to have to do.”

Zamyatta was puzzled. “What work?”

“My blond friend means do we see that you two are put away, or do we turn you loose?” Solo said.

The two prisoners stared at the agents.

## TWO

The hulking shape of Jemi Zamyatta sat on the bunk in the cell and listened to the story of the two U.N.C.L.E. agents. Colonel Brown was a more nervous type. The colonel paced the floor of the cell. When Illya and Solo had finished, Zamyatta spoke. The bull-like opposition leader spread his powerful hands.

“I swear, gentlemen, there was no coup!”

Colonel Brown swore. “None at all! There was no threat to the premier.”

“Except, perhaps, a change in Zambala,” Jemi Zamyatta said. “We are becoming a country. The days of chaos are over, or they were. If I were to

be elected, I was ready to amnesty Max Steng and his men. No, the danger was that the great Lion of Zambala might not win a next election!"

"Was it generally known that you planned to pardon the Stengali?" Illya asked.

"No, not generally—but Roy knew!" Zamyatta said.

Colonel Brown said, "And he knew that I favored such a move! Any such move. The army has been too important too long here. There is too much of Zambala still in the hands of the rich and the foreign companies."

Illya Kuryakin frowned. "Just to stay in power is not enough for all this. I mean, no election had to be held for four years."

"The pressure on the government to spend more money on peaceful development might have caused Roy worry," Zamyatta said,

Illya shook his head. "No, there is more behind this."

Zamyatta looked at the two agents. "Let me say again, there was no planned coup. I know nothing of the attacks on Roy or Mura Khan. I had no dealing with Max Steng, or with the Colonel here."

Illya rubbed his chin. "I saw you two meet."

"Colonel Brown asked to speak to me," Zamyatta said.

"I had been told to question Mr. Zamyatta," Colonel Brown said. "There was a report of undue influence among my men by Mr. Zamyatta."

"Who gave you that report?" Solo asked.

Colonel Brown looked at Zamyatta. "The premier told me! He said it was a test. He did not want anyone to know he had ordered it. I was to prepare my men for a move, but tell no one why."

Illya shrugged. "He set it up, Napoleon. All of it. It was all intended to create the threat of a coup."

"And we fell into it," Solo said.

"No, we were guided into it," Illya said.

Solo turned to Colonel Brown. "Why did your men shoot at us on the cliff road, and later when we were with the Stengali?"

Brown showed surprise. "My men? No, Mr. Solo. My men pursued you in the hills. We had orders to hold anyone who came to Tidworth. But

we gave up after you escaped our trap. We did not pursue the Stengali, and we did not shoot at you on the cliff road. None of my men left the camp."

"The major who was killed," Illya said, and described the dead major to Colonel Brown.

The colonel shook his head. "I have no major like that, no officer who fits that description."

"A fake, and a fake unit!" Solo said. "And Bengali was with them!"

"We've been played like fish on a line," Illya said.

"Maybe we can be the fishermen," Solo said.

"It seems like a good idea," Illya said.

"What do you want us to do?" Colonel Brown said.

"Be ready," Illya said. "Colonel, do your men trust you? I mean, will they follow your orders against the premier?"

Brown shook his head. "No, not unless I can prove to them that the premier is a traitor."

"But they will follow your orders against someone else? If they get proof later?"

"Yes, I think so. Who else?"

Illya frowned again. "I'm not ready to say, it's only an idea, but it seems that there are some other armed men on this island we have to deal with."

"You want me to return to my command?" Brown asked.

"Yes, and bring them into San Pablo," Illya said. He looked at Zamyatta. "Can you reach the Stengali, Mr. Zamyatta?"

"I can try," Jemi Zamyatta said. "They must have heard of my arrest. Max Steng and I were long-time friends."

"Try to reach them and bring them into San Pablo."

"Where in San Pablo?" both men wanted to know.

"The presidential palace," Illya said. "Bring all the men you can as soon as you can. Capture anyone you don't know, or anyone who resists. We can apologize to the wrong ones later."

Without more discussion, the four men left the cells and quickly stripped two of the guards. Zamyatta and Colonel Brown disguised themselves in the guards' clothes. Then the four men went down through the silent prison corridors and out the front door.

In the prison yard they found police vehicles. Solo went to work and crossed wires to start two of the jeeps. Zamyatta took one and headed off into the mountains toward the tall mountain with the long scar near the summit.

Colonel Julio Brown took the other jeep and started along the road toward Tidworth Barracks.

Solo and Illya drove their own small stolen car through a silent and deserted San Pablo toward the presidential palace. They had to drive carefully. The city was silent under the edict of martial law, and patrols of troops walked the streets.

But there were few patrols. Illya and Solo looked at each other.

The martial law was another fake—just enough martial law to convince the people of Zambala that a crisis existed. A crisis someone wanted to exist!

"When we get to the palace," Illya said, "I'll go in. You take the car and go to O'Hara."

Solo nodded. "Bengali knew who we were, by name. Only O'Hara knew who we were."

"Unless he told someone," Illya said.

"When I have the word, I'll call you," Solo said.

The car drove on carefully through the silent city.

The wide grounds of the presidential palace were silent and shadowed in the night. Illya Kuryakin glided silently from tree to tree, closer always toward the palace. Men in uniform patrolled the grounds—men not in army uniforms but in black uniforms!

Illya crept and crawled until he reached the cover of the thick bushes that surrounded the palace. He moved through the bushes around the palace, sinking out of sight from time to time as soldiers passed in groups of two.

He reached the kitchen door he had noticed earlier. It was locked. With one of his picklocks he opened the door and slid inside.

Illya moved along the dark halls. There were voices. He entered the enormous entry hall of the palace. The voices came from the room where the tribunal met. Illya cat-footed to the door and looked in. Chairman Ramirez was there with most of the other members.

But both O'Hara and Boya, the labor leader, were not there.

Illya turned away and moved silently through the other downstairs rooms. He did not find what he was searching for. From the rear of the house he went up the service stairs to the second floor. He saw a line of light far off at the end of the long upstairs corridor that was as wide as the corridor of a grand hotel, and carpeted with deep carpet.

The light came from a room at the opposite end of the palace from the room where the tribunal met below, a room that showed no light from the outside or Illya would have seen it. He started along the hall and saw the guard.

The man in the black uniform was seated in a chair between Illya and the room that showed light. He held a submachine gun across his lap, and was tilted back in the chair, cleaning his nails with a long trench knife.

At his feet was a small black box that had to be a radio.

There was no way past the guard, and no way to creep up on him silently enough. If Illya shot the man with a sleep dart, the chair would go out and there would be noise. In addition, his ears told him that the radio was switched on! It was a transmitter, and any sound would be heard at the other end, wherever that was.

Illya looked around. He was near the door of a room that showed no light beneath it. He went into the room and crossed it to the window. As he remembered, a narrow ledge of decoration ran around the palace at this height. He opened the window and climbed out onto the ledge.

Flat against the building in the dark, he inched like a fly on the wall toward the window of the room where the guard sat—he had noticed that the guard was practically against the door of the room. As he inched his way he saw the soldiers pass below, but they did not look up, and, luckily, this night clouds covered the moon.

Illya reached the room he wanted and went in through the window. He crossed the room to the door. His move had to be fast and soundless. He took another small capsule from his pocket, took a deep breath, and jerked the door open. He was through the door and on the man in a second.

The guard leaped up. There was no sound on the deep pile carpet. The chair came away from the wall. The man half-turned toward him. Illya squeezed the capsule, caught the man, and dragged him into the room. He came back out, closed the door, and listened.

There had been no sound at all.

The radio transmitter still hummed faintly under the chair. Illya stepped past and went to the door that showed light. There were voices inside and a large keyhole. Illya bent down to look. He saw them through the keyhole. Two men and a woman, laughing and drinking champagne from a row of bottles in ice buckets. He could see no one else.

One of the men was the tall Premier M.M. Roy, the Lion of Zambala. The woman seemed vaguely familiar. Then she turned and he saw her face. For a moment he did not recognize the beautiful face. Then Solo's description came to him -Jezzi Mahal!

The woman laughing now, drinking champagne with Premier M.M. Roy, was Jezzi Mahal. The woman who had killed Inspector Tembo! The woman who was Colonel Brown's girl-friend! The woman who had been so deeply involved in the plot against the premier! The woman who now leaned on the tall, laughing premier, who turned up her beautiful face and kissed M.M. Roy!

And the third man, who raised his glass in a toast inside the guarded room, was Ahmed Bengali! All three of them laughed together—and Illya knew what they laughed at.

## THREE

Illya kicked in the door, and stood there with his U.NC.L.E. Special covering all three of them. For a minute they stood with their champagne glasses raised, laughter still on their lips.

“Let me in on the joke,” Illya said. “I enjoy a good laugh.”

Premier M.M. Roy was a very well-trained diplomat. Shocked as he must have been, as much as the gaping mouths of the woman and Bengali showed they were, the tall premier managed a cool smile.

“Ah, Mr. Kuryakin. What a pleasant surprise. I thought you were on your way home.”

“You were supposed to think that, Your Excellency,” Illya said.

“So I gather,” Roy said. “May I ask why? And just what you are doing in my private rooms with that weapon? The guard—”

“Is asleep,” Illya said bluntly. “I’m afraid it was necessary to make you think you had fooled us.”

“Fooled you?” Roy said, for the first time a faint edge of something coming into his voice.

“With the coup business,” Illya said. “It wasn’t done badly, but a trifle clumsily, I’m afraid. Especially your friend Bengali, there. He shouldn’t have been quite so on-the-spot to be sure that we came back safely with our news of the coup by Colonel Brown.”

Roy placed his champagne glass on a table. “I see.”

“And he really should never have used our names. That was a bad mistake. How could he know our names? Even you did not know our names.”

Roy looked sadly at Bengali, who was now quite pale. The dark security man began to stammer. Roy sighed.

“Really, Ahmed, you should have been more careful,” Roy said.

The tall premier looked at Illya. “Well, just what do you have in mind?”

“I think the OAS will be most interested in a premier who fakes a coup so that he can declare a crisis and martial law. I presume you intended to liquidate Zamyatta and Colonel Brown at some convenient time after the heat had cooled,” Illya said. “The relation between yourself and Miss Mahal will fascinate them. I imagine Bengali will tell us all.”

The dark security man swore. “Why, you -”

“Yes, I imagine he would,” Roy said. “Just what do you think ‘all’ may be, Mr. Kuryakin?”

“You faked attempts on your life, killed your own security chief. I expect Mura Khan was too honest. Bengali here will be more pliable. I assume that Bengali arranged much of the fake assassinations, the bombs, all the rest.

“I also expect that Nathan Bedford had seen Mr. Bengali, so he had to be killed. Did you do that, too, Bengali?”

“I’ll do better with you, Kuryakin!” Bengali said.

“The purpose was to convince the world that Zambala was about to experience a coup and perhaps a civil war. You knew that the OAS, and the United States, would never stand for that here. You would expose the coup, prevent it, and be in complete charge for much longer than any election would allow.”

The premier laughed. “But, Mr. Kuryakin, why would I do all that when my government was in no danger?”

“I think to create a crisis. You would be rid of all threats of an election loss, and you would create a sensitive area in Zambala, a crisis in which you could again be the hero.”

“Not good enough, Mr. Kuryakin. Not at all,” Roy said.

Illya shrugged. “What does it matter? Perhaps you are just insane. The facts speak for themselves. You did it, and we can prove it now. When we tell the world, I think there will be a new government in Zambala.”

The new voice came not from behind Illya where the door was, but from his right. A fine, cultured voice.

“Alas, how true, Mr. Kuryakin. A new government, and I could not allow that. You are right, and how unfortunate for you!”

Illya began to turn.

“Drop the weapon, please, Mr. Kuryakin.”

Illya dropped his Special and turned toward the voice. There were five men standing in front of a secret passage into the room. Four of them were black-clad soldiers. The fifth smiled at Illya Kuryakin.

*

Solo entered the mansion of O'Hara as silently as a snake. The boyish agent crossed the large living room to the bookcase. He pressed the secret button. The bookcase opened. Solo went inside and the bookcase closed behind him.

The girl agent at the desk smiled at him.

"We thought you had left, Mr. Solo."

Solo looked around quickly. "Er, yes, I did leave, but I came back. May I have my badge?"

The girl handed him his badge. Then she tensed as if sensing something.

"Does Mr. O'Hara expect you?"

"I doubt it," Solo said pleasantly.

The girl reached for the pistol in the holster behind her back. It was the correct procedure for a field headquarters—no one entered U.N.C.L.E. Field Headquarters anywhere in the world without the written consent of the agent-in-charge, or without the agent-in-charge having notified the reception desk of the arrival. No one, not even Mr. Waverly or any other member of Section I!

The girl acted as she had been trained—but she had made the error of not acting at once, lulled by her acquaintance with Napoleon Solo.

Solo caught her as gently as he could, pressed the spot on her neck, and she slumped in his arms. He returned her to her chair. He hurried down the small corridor. The alarm system passed him, of course, since he was wearing the badge the girl had so carelessly given him. He reached O'Hara's office. The TV camera scanned him—and O'Hara made the same error. The door opened.

O'Hara looked up and saw Solo standing there with his U.NL.C.L.E. Special aimed straight at O'Hara. The Zambalan chief-agent blinked, opened his mouth, and then started to reach for a button.

"Ah, ah!" Solo said. "No, O'Hara, don't. I would be forced to put you to sleep and ask my questions in private with pentathol."

O’Hara moved his hand away. “Questions? Have you gone mad, Napoleon?”

“Maybe. But I don’t think so.”

O’Hara blinked. “You came back? I—What’s up? What do you mean with that gun?”

“If I’m wrong, O’Hara, I might apologize. But it is clear now that there was no coup, no attempt at revolt, no assassinations or attempts. It was all a put-up job by Premier Roy. But not the premier alone. Someone else in Zambala is behind it, and that someone knew, and knows, who Illya and I are!”

“A put-up job? No coup? Someone else?”

O’Hara stared at Solo as if either he or Solo had lost his mind. The chief-agent seemed to sit there at his desk totally paralyzed. Twice he stopped. He seemed to be staring at Solo’s pistol.

“You were the only person in Zambala who knew who we were!” Solo said. “No one else knew U.N.C.L.E. existed in Zambala! Unless you told someone.”

Solo watched the chief-agent-in-Zambala. Only twice before in U.N.C.L.E. history had an agent at any level turned traitor for any reason. Once the unfortunate man had lost his mind. The second time was the case of the woman in Personnel, Section V, who had been a planted THRUSH agent. Never had anyone above Section III been suspected—and O’Hara was Section II!

“Knew? No one knew! No one outside myself and two agents in this office, communications and reception, could have known! It is not possible! I told no one at all except perhaps -”

O’Hara stopped. Napoleon Solo froze. For a full fifteen seconds the two men stared at each other. It was O’Hara who spoke.

“Except Carlos Ramirez! The night you reported the connection between Colonel Brown and Zamyatta that you had found at Jezzi Mahal’s beach house. I told Ramirez!”

Solo turned without a word and ran out of O’Hara’s office.

He ran down the corridor where the other agents had found the receptionist and were waiting with guns drawn.

“No! Let him pass!” O’Hara shouted, strapping on his gun, running after Solo.

Carlos Ramirez smiled at Illya Kuryakin. The tall, white-haired old poet leaned on his cane and smiled sadly at the blond agent. Illya could not take his eyes off the distinguished face of the old poet and patriot.

“You!” Illya said.

The old man shrugged, his austere face suddenly going hard, twisted. “Me! Yes, the old poet! Why is it that you idealistic young men must think that because a man is a poet he must also be a fool? Mao-Tse-Tung is a poet, a great poet, perhaps better than I! Then why should not a Western poet be also a practical man of politics, and power, and profit!”

“Poet and patriot,” Illya said.

The old man laughed. “Patriot? The last refuge of a scoundrel, Mr. Kuryakin. But in my case, being a patriot means being a Zambalan. I want the best for my country—and the best is that I run the country behind the figure of the Lion of Zambala! It is my country!”

The fine and noble old face twisted into a mask of sudden hate. “My country, and my power! Where do you think a man gets his power, Mr. Kuryakin? From his money and his influence! I own many companies. I am the man who gets the loans from abroad. I sell the guns, Mr. Kuryakin, and the means of defense! If they all stop fighting, if there is no crisis in Zambala, if the great powers are not worried, then where do I get my power?”

The old man laughed. “For me to remain powerful, I must have them against each other. I must have a crisis all the time. Zamyatta was going to pardon Steng! Julio Brown wanted peace in Zambala! The lion and the lamb were to lie down and work out the future without strife! I could not have that. No, in another few years Steng could have laid down his arms, Zamyatta could win an election, Colonel Brown could have made friends and peace.

“Could I allow that, Mr. Kuryakin? No! Why, in a really independent and free Zambala, who knows what the people might learn of how I live,

and how much the Lion of Zambala and myself owe to the, shall we say, contributions of certain foreign companies? Zambala belongs to those companies, and to me! I intend to keep it despite the childish dreams of Zamyattas and Colonel Browns and Max Stengs!”

All the while the old man had been speaking, Illya had watched them all. The old man was clearly half mad. But the others, the tall premier, the woman, the dark Bengali, they all had a stake in keeping Zambala in crisis. The soldiers in black showed only that they were loyal to Ramirez. Now the old poet saw Illya carefully watching. He smiled.

“Ah, you are always alert, Mr. Kuryakin. I like that. When O’Hara told me who you were, I knew we had to act faster than we had intended. Who knows what might have happened if you had had too much time to think after your visit to Brown. Still, Bengali was very stupid. Sergeant!”

The old man waved his cane once and snapped the word, “Sergeant!” The sergeant fired a burst from his submachine gun. Ahmed Bengali was hurled backwards and lay dead in a pool of blood.

“I dislike bunglers,” Carlos Ramirez said. “Bring him!”

The old poet turned and stalked from the room, leaning heavily on his cane. The soldiers prodded Illya Kuryakin.

The blond agent marched out with M.M. Roy and the woman behind him.

## FOUR

The old poet led the way down a narrow flight of hidden stairs behind the walls of the old palace. They seemed to go down for some time, but Illya realized that they were only going at an angle behind the walls. At last they came out into a large room that was lined with stone walls.

“The cellar, Mr. Kuryakin. As you know, San Pablo was once a pirate port. This cellar is part of the old castle. It is most convenient. Listen.”

The old man held up his thin, aristocratic hand. Illya listened. There was a sound, a strange sound off to the left. The sound of running water!

Carlos Ramirez smiled. “Yes, an old underground river. It is all but forgotten, you see. But I always loved the history of my country, and there was a story of the river. It runs out to the sea in a hidden cove. The old governor often used it for his pirate forays. I find it most convenient for disposing of unwelcome guests.”

“Very interesting,” Illya said.

“Isn’t it?” Ramirez said. “Bring them all. We will get them out this way.”

The soldiers marched Illya across the large, gloomy cellar to the left wall. The old man opened a door. Through the door Illya could see the deep dark river running fast, and a boat moored to the side. A stone walkway seemed to run to the right out of sight. Ramirez turned to face Illya.

“I don’t imagine you could be persuaded to join me? I could make it worth your while. I like intelligent young men. Surely you have enough intelligence to know that we live in a jungle, and that you could do so much better if you would drop your ridiculous ideals.”

“I imagine I could, ” Illya said. “But I prefer to keep my ridiculous ideals.”

“Why, Mr. Kuryakin?”

“Because someone must have them.”

“Ah, an honest public servant. Unfortunate.”

“Besides, there is Mr. Solo.”

“Naturally, my offer includes him.”

Illya nodded. “I suggest you tell him yourself then.”

Ramirez laughed. “Really, Mr. Kuryakin, I -”

The old poet never finished. Solo appeared in the doorway to the secret river. O’Hara stood beside him. The soldiers started towards them. Solo and O’Hara cut them down in a hail of bullets. M.M. Roy raised his hands. The Lion of Zambala shouted his surrender!

“Don’t shoot! Don’t shoot.”

The woman, Jezzi Mahal, was made of stronger metal. She bent quickly to snatch a gun from a fallen soldier.

Illya Kuryakin dove for cover.

For a long moment the old man stood alone in the center of the cellar staring in disbelief as his men fell under the hail of accurate fire from the U.N.C.L.E. Specials of Solo and O'Hara.

Then Jezzi Mahal opened fire. Solo and O'Hara turned their guns on her. She was down behind a heavy cask. The two agents had to take cover. Illya leaped up from where he had been lying and tackled the woman. She went down biting and kicking. Solo and O'Hara came to his aid. Together they subdued the woman. Illya looked around.

"Ramirez!"

The old poet was gone. Illya and Solo left O'Hara with the prisoners and searched the cellar. Illya saw the second secret exit. It was a narrow tunnel that led up and out into the grounds.

"He's gone for his soldiers."

"I saw them," Solo said. "A whole private army."

"Upstairs, quick!" Illya cried.

They herded their two prisoners up the same way they had come down and came out in the main entry hall. The members of the tribunal were milling like sheep. Illya waved his pistol, the gun he had picked from one of the dead soldiers.

"Inside! Back inside!" Illya shouted.

They all went back into the ornate conference room. O'Hara went to work barricading the only door. It was heavy and had a strong lock. O'Hara, and the members of the international tribunal, piled chairs, enormous sideboards, and cabinets against the door. O'Hara handed extra guns to members of the tribunal, and told them to guard Roy and the Mahal woman.

At the windows, Illya and Solo looked out into the dark grounds of the palace.

"It's quiet," Solo said.

"It won't be," Illya said. "Ramirez won't give up. If he can kill us all, he can still get away with it."

"At least he'll try," Solo said. "Here they come!"

The black-uniformed troops came out of the dark and trees and ran toward the palace. Illya and Solo held their fire. Then, as the black-uniformed troops almost reached the palace, they opened fire.

The attackers went down like wheat under a scythe from the fire of the two agents. Some of the tribunal members joined them at the windows. O'Hara covered a third window.

The attackers turned and ran back to the trees.

In the ornate and elegant room of the palace, Illya and Solo watched the dark trees. The two agents lighted cigarettes and sat down against the wall.

"He'll send them back," Solo said.

"He will," Illya said.

"How much do you think they'll take?"

"Hard to say. Let us hope, Napoleon, that they will take very little more."

"We have very little more to give," Solo said. "Ammunition."

"I'd rather not think about that," Illya said.

Solo raised up and looked out the window. A faint light was streaking the sky to the east. Dawn, and in the light Solo saw the black figures come again out of the trees. The two agents rested their guns on the windowsills.

They beat off one more attack.

On the third attack there was not enough ammunition. The black-uniformed attackers poured into the palace and began to beat on the door into the ornate and vast conference room. Solo and Illya fired their last rounds into the heavy door. Screams outside and for a moment the attack on the door stopped. Then the shouts began again, and -

The shouts stopped.

The hammering on the door stopped.

Many feet ran away out of the palace.

There was the sound of many guns firing outside on the grounds, elegant in the growing light of dawn. Illya and Solo raced to the windows.

Outside the black-uniformed soldiers were broken and running, some of them. Most had dropped their guns and stood with hands high.

Through the trees of the palace grounds, the whole of San Pablo spread out below in the dawn behind them, came the ragged guerrillas of Max Steng, Mr. Smith and Steng himself in the lead. And with them were the uniformed men of the second regiment, Colonel Brown and Jemi Zamyatta leading them.

“Look!” Solo said, pointing.

One small knot of black-uniformed soldiers had formed and now opened fire. Standing behind these men was Carlos Ramirez. The old poet stood tall, his cane waving, urging his men on.

The Stengali and the second regiment troops opened fire.

Carlos Ramirez fell with the last of his men.

*

Alexander Waverly searched in the pockets of his waistcoat for a match. The busy brows of the aristocratic face were knit in a frown as he failed to find a match. Napoleon Solo handed his chief a book of matches.

“Er, thank you, Mr. Solo,” Waverly said. “Well, although I must say that you gentlemen took a frightfully long time to realize how you were being handled, the affair seems to be coming to a satisfactory conclusion. The mice have won and the cat is gone, shall we say?”

“Roy?”

Waverly succeeded in lighting his pipe. “Yes, with Ramirez dead, Roy seemed to think it wise to allow his deputy to become acting premier. The acting premier has exposed all Roy’s personal dealings with various American and British companies who think more of profit than people. The election will be held next week. Zamyatta seems assured of victory, especially since Max Steng has agreed to stand with him.”

“I believe even Mr. Smith is standing for parliament,” Illya said.

“And Colonel Brown, although refusing to participate in politics, has agreed to serve as minister of war and security chief, no matter who wins

the elections."

"I should think it a shoo-in for Zamyatta and Steng," Solo said thoughtfully.

Waverly puffed on his pipe. "No election is a shoo-in, Mr. Solo. The people can never be predicted. That is the truth of a free system. So be it."

Waverly frowned and sighed. His pipe had gone out. He looked sadly at it. "Our problem is a bit less pleasant. O'Hara, of course, proved quite loyal, and his knowledge of that secret river entrance into the palace certainly saved the day, eh, Mr. Solo?"

"It did, sir," Solo said.

Waverly nodded moodily. "Yes. However, as you reported, Mr. Solo, O'Hara told Ramirez who you were, and his organization is lax. No, there is no way out of it. O'Hara and his entire unit must go. I have sent the de-training team down. O'Hara and all his people will be de-trained and let go."

"Is that necessary, sir?" Illya said. "He's a good man."

"Not necessary, Mr. Kuryakin. Mandatory," Waverly said. "O'Hara and his people were guilty of a security breach. I have taken steps to replace them already. Unfortunate. You know, I recruited Martin O'Hara personally many years ago. I knew his father quite well."

For a long minute the two agents watched their chief look sad and old —much older than they could have guessed. Then Waverly took a deep breath, and began to look again for a match.

"Well, enough of our little cat and mouse affair," Waverly said crisply. "You gentlemen are ready, I trust? It seems that our friends of THRUSH are up to their tricks again!"

Illya Kuryakin and Napoleon Solo smiled to each other and sat back to listen in the sunny office.

**THE END**

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